

**THE JORDANIAN NOVEL (1980-1990):**

**A STUDY AND AN ASSESSMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

This study traces the origin and development of the Jordanian novel from 1920s to late 1980s, and consists of three parts in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The introduction covers the rationale for undertaking such a study as well as the methodology and critical perspective adopted in this thesis. It also includes some basic definitions relevant to the work itself.

The first part comprises two chapters. The first covers an historical survey describing the genealogy of the Jordanian novel, the different stages of its development and the major discernible trends up to 1970s. The second chapter examines the works of Ghalib Halasa produced during 1970s until his death in 1989, which are considered important contributions to the novel in Jordan.

The second part, which comprises two chapters, deals with the experimental trends during 1980s up to 1990. The first of these considers the works of Mu'nis al-Razzaz in detail, shedding light on the experimentation in the techniques and the form of the novel. The second of these takes Elias Farkouh's work *Qāmāt al-Zabad* as another attempt to explore new forms of composition and narration. The third part presents the Jordanian novel produced in the conventional form with special reference to a particular work by Ziyad Qasim, who stands out among his contemporaries in his artistic achievements.

In the conclusion, a general evaluation of the Jordanian novel of 1980s is given. It is concluded therein that the experimental novelists, such as Mu'nis al-Razzaz and Elias Farkouh, influenced the subsequent generation more profoundly than any other leading novelists of that period.

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Throughout this study, I have consistently used the symbols indicated below for transliterating Arabic words into English. This is the system adopted by SOAS for transliteration. The only exception to this rule is in the spelling of the following names of authors who presented me with the spelling they use for their names, and consequently I consistently used them in my text according to their own desire: Mu'nis al-Razzaz, Ziyad Qasim and Elias Farkouh. Similarly, Ghalib Halasa's name retains its spelling which was given to me by one of his friends. Authors of English works who happen to be Arabs and whose names are spelled out in their books are maintained as they appear there, regardless of any form of transliteration.

Long uppercase (A) as in the word "garden" (Ā) at the beginning of an Arabic word; when it occurs anywhere else (ā). Long uppercase (U), the equivalent of the Arabic letter (waw), as in "poor," (Ū) when it occurs at the beginning of an Arabic word and (ū) when it occurs in the middle or at the end of a word. Long uppercase (I) as in the word "deep" (Ī) which stands for the Arabic letter (ya') when a word begins with it and (ī) when it occurs anywhere else.

The sound of the 6th Arabic alphabetical letter when at the beginning of a word (H) and in the middle or end of a word (ḥ). The sound of the 7th Arabic alphabetical letter is represented by the two letters (Kh) at the beginning of a word, and (kh) in any other place.

The 9th Arabic alphabetical letter is represented by the two letters (Dh) at the beginning of a word and (dh) in other places. The sound of the 14th Arabic alphabetical letter is represented by the symbol (S) at the beginning of a word and (s) anywhere else.

The sound of the 15th Arabic alphabetical letter is represented by (Ḍ) at the beginning and (ḍ) otherwise. The sound of the 16th Arabic alphabetical letter is (Ṭ) and (ṭ) at the beginning and the other places respectively. The sound of the 17th Arabic alphabetical letter is represented by (Ẓ) and (ẓ) respectively. The sound of the 18th Arabic alphabetical letter is (ʿ) wherever it occurs. The glotal stop character *Hamzah* is represented wherever it occurs by the symbol (ʾ).

The sound of the 19th Arabic alphabetical letter is represented by the two letters (Gh) at the beginning of a word, and (gh) anywhere else. All the other sounds of the Arabic alphabet are represented by their equivalent English phonetically similar letters.

# INTRODUCTION

This study will attempt to examine the Jordanian novel as it is manifested in the major works that appeared during the period 1980-1990. The choice of the area of study has been inspired by several reasons, not least among them is the artistic value which these works exhibit and the themes which can be taken to represent an Arab national scene rather than a local or regional representation. This is due naturally to the organic relation which connects Arab writers and intellectuals who have experienced the recent political developments in the region, the rise of authoritarian regimes and the domination of political ideologies that can be at least described as unsympathetic to the hopes and aspirations of the Arab nation.



The great hopes and expectations which the Arab nation had after liberation from colonialism and the establishment of independent Arab states were quickly crushed by the rise of militarism to power and the restrictions they imposed on freedom of speech and expression, in addition to the violation of the basic human rights of their citizens. In their novels, Jordanian writers gave expression to those hopes, aspirations and the ultimate disappointment by which the nation was confronted. The engagement with the national care reflects the profound involvement of these authors in an ideology that is both anti-regionalistic and anti-discriminationist, particularly that the novelist who come from different religions reveal a tolerant attitude that characterises their work, and consequently their own ideologies.

A second reason which presented this choice for my research is the special artistic traits with which these works are endowed, particularly the works of al-Razzaz, Halasa, Farkouh and Qasim who in their presentation of events, characters and historical context reveal a maturity in handling significant developments in the art of the novel, a maturity which, when one considers the history of the country, invites admiration to their achievement.

A third factor that encouraged my research to take this particular area, though less important than the previous ones, is the absence of any discussion of the Jordanian novel by scholars and critics in English, an absence which poses some questions as to the reasons for such an attitude towards this specific production. In my survey of the written works on the Arabic novel in English, I came across valuable studies on the novel in different Arab countries, but nothing on the novel in Jordan.<sup>1</sup>

It struck me as a great loss for students who may be interested in learning something about the Arabic novel, not to be introduced to works which these Jordanian novelists wrote. These factors put together determined the course of my research with the main objective of introducing the Jordanian novel to the English-reading scholars and academics.

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<sup>1</sup>Many studies appeared in English discussing Arabic literature, and in these studies one comes across the production of the novel in different Arab countries, apart from Jordan. See, for example, Muhammed Sadiq, *Patterns of Identity in the Hebrew and Arabic Novel* (University of California, 1974);

Mary N. Layoun, *The Modern Novel and Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Roger Allen, Linda Hutcheon and Ed De Moor (eds.), *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1995) 'Ali B.

Jad, *Form and Technique in the Egyptian Novel (1952-1971)*. (London: Ithaca Press, 1983).

The only reference to a work by a Jordanian writer appears in Roger Allen's chapter on "The Mature Arabic Novel outside Egypt," in *Modern Arabic Literature* edited by M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.201, where there is a reference to Amīn Shinnār's work, *al-Kābūs*, without mentioning him as a Jordanian novelist. In fact, there is not a single reference to anything that indicates the existence of the Jordanian novel.

I have restricted the focus of my study to the early eighties and up to 1990, due to the degree of "maturity" with which the works that appeared during this decade are characterised, when compared with the preceding periods which, as will be shown in the first chapter, did not develop sufficiently to deserve detailed examination (see chapter 1 pp.40-44). The restriction of the study to this period allows for a somewhat detailed discussion of these works. I believe that novels present a socio-historical perspective which besides its literary value can stand as an important document of the parallel history of the region, a sort of document that can never be found in official histories. It is for these reasons that I find the novel as a genre of great significance and value.

I present my definition of the epithet "Jordanian" in order to differentiate between Palestinian novelists who hold Jordanian nationality by birth or by forced migration from Palestine and those who are Jordanians by origin or choice. I define "Jordanian," as one who lived in the East Bank of the river Jordan, or whose family had been living there before the 1948 events in Palestine. This definition implies an ideological viewpoint, based on the necessity of confirming the Palestinian identity, particularly during this critical period in the history of the region. Such a definition also conforms to the political decision taken in 1974 by the Arab Summit Conference held in Rabat to consider the Palestine Liberation Organisation (hereafter PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, thus acknowledging officially an independent identity for them. The works written by authors of Palestinian origin whether in the East or West Bank during the period covered by my research are considered to be by Palestinian and not Jordanian writers.

Thus many novelists who live presently in Jordan and who hold Jordanian nationality are by my definition Palestinians. Novelists such as, Jamāl Nājī, Ibrāhīm Nasrallah, Fārūq Wādī, Liyāna Badr, Saḥar Khalīfah, Laylā al-Atrash who have produced excellent works of art deserve to be discussed by any scholar examining the Palestinian novel. In fact, these novelists appear in many studies and anthologies of Palestinian literature.

I employ the term "artistic," to refer to specific aspects of writing novels, particularly the ability to employ narrative techniques, the skill in manipulating language in the service of themes, and the ability to structure effective and convincing plots and present character delineation aesthetically.

I also employ the term "production," in reference to the writing of the novel. By production I mean a relationship between the intellectual and material efforts in presenting commodities. The "production" of works of art is in many aspects analogous to the "production" of commodities, in terms of its tools, distribution, exploitation and profits. I practically adopt Terry Eagleton's approach to literature as a commodity and the relationship between "the literary mode of production (LMP)," and "the general mode of production (GMP)".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: NLB, 1976), pp.45-50. Eagleton argues that "Every LMP is constituted by structures of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. Production presupposes a producer or set of producers, materials, instruments and techniques of production, and the product itself. In developed social formations, an initial private stage of production may be transmuted by a subsequent social mode of production (printing and publishing) to convert the original product ('manuscript') into a new one ('book'). The forces of literary production consist in the application of labour-

During the eighties, the novel in Jordan developed along two different lines: the first being represented by authors whom I describe as "The conventional group" of writers which followed in the footsteps of the early writings of Arab novelists such as Naguib Mahfouz, Yūsuf Idrīs and Ḥannā Mīnā. By conventional techniques I mean the narrative devices that dominated the writing of the novel during the nineteenth century and up till World War I in Europe, mainly French and English novels, where the narration is presented by an omniscient narrator, organised in a chronological order, and the characters are presented through their external appearances, while their psychology, thoughts and feelings are presented to the reader through the eyes of the omniscient narrator. The conventional writers attempted to produce literary works guided by the conventions of the "realist" novel through adhering to the strict chronological order of events viewed through the eyes of the omniscient author-narrator. Some representative novelists of this line of the novel in Jordan are Ṭāhir al-'Adwān, Ziyad Qasim, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Mango and Yūsuf Ḍamrah.

The second line which can be noticed in the production of the novel in Jordan during the eighties appears in the works of those authors I classify as 'The avant-garde' on whom the influence of Western trends that were in vogue in the West during the twenties and thirties is easily traced. The influence of Kafka, Proust, Woolfe, Joyce and Faulkner cannot be mistaken on the

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power organised in certain 'relations of production' (scribes, collaborative producers, printing and publishing organisations) to certain materials of production by means of certain determinate productive instruments. These forces of literary production determine and are overdetermined by the modes of literary distribution, exchange and consumption." p.47.

followers of this line. The common denominator that allows this classification of these writers in one group is the unconventionality of their approach to the novel in both form and content. Thus my classification of the writers of this line in the novel in Jordan in one group depends on the view that they all depart from the "realistic" forms, and that they have a strong Western influence that characterises their works. Among the novelists of this group are Mu'nis al-Razzaz and Elias Farkouh.

It is necessary also to point out here that some Jordanian writers who live in either the USA or Europe produced novels in English during the eighties and nineties. I have not included their works in this study for several reasons, the first being that their works are considered, in a sense, part of English or American literature. Secondly, their works cannot claim to have had any interaction with the literary movement in Jordan, or to have any influence on the lay reader in Jordan, since they are written in a foreign language that is inaccessible to those readers who can only read and understand Arabic texts. Thirdly, the writers expressed themselves in English either by choice or through their inability to use Arabic as a means of expression. I therefore omitted these writers from my study, in spite of the fact that many of their themes and subject matters are relevant to the Arab world, because I only examine works that are produced in Arabic and not any other foreign language. I mention among these writers, Fadia al-Faqir and Diana Abu Jabir.

This study consists of five chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter, I present an historical survey of the development of the Jordanian

novel, from the early years of this century up till 1979. In this part, the major trends that dominate the literary production are given emphasis through references to the major works of the period. In this survey, I avoided repeating the history of the Arabic novel which has been covered widely by Western and Arab scholars alike. It mainly concentrates on the specific area of my research relating to the attempts at producing novels in Jordan. In the second chapter I examine the novels of Ghalib Halasa, a Jordanian novelist who spent his life in exile and whose production is on the whole highly artistic, whether in its thematic or narrative structures. Halasa whose work extends over the seventies and up to the late eighties, will not be examined in its entirety, but rather taken into discussion through the examination of three of his novels.

In the third chapter, the works of Mu'nis al-Razzaz that were produced during the period of this study are examined and in the fourth chapter Elias Farkouh's novel which was produced during the same period is discussed. In the fifth chapter, the work of Ziyad Qasim is presented as a sample of Jordanian novelists who followed in their production conventional techniques. In the conclusion, I will attempt to present briefly the major characteristics of the Jordanian novel during the eighties as will be perceived through the whole work.

My approach in handling this subject relies heavily on a descriptive manner which attempts through the examination of the texts, the themes, the structures and the language employed in these works and the functionality of each of these aspects in presenting the work to the reader to draw a general view of the Jordanian novel as it stands up to the late eighties. This

methodology has been adopted on the ground that the totality of these works has not been circulated in translation yet; thus an extensive examination of their artistic aspects needs to be demonstrated by textual analysis.

In the sections that relate to language, with the exception of the section on Mu'nis al-Razzaz, I have included Arabic quotations alongside the English translations, in order to reveal certain linguistic aspects that when discussed in the absence of the original texts, lose much of their value. All translations are mine, whether from the novels or from Arab critics.

In my dealing with these texts, I have not adopted any single critical approach, but felt free to use and profit from different critical schools and their ideas. My indebtedness to critical theory cannot be denied and is evident in the manner which I present my critical views. I must in particular acknowledge the impact of Terry Eagleton, Raymond Williams, Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, Roland Barthes, Jonathan Culler, Northrop Frye, Cleanth Brooks and René Welleck. These critics in particular have contributed much to my work through their arguments which sometimes I quote or borrow without being aware of the act. The names of Western critics can extend indefinitely, but for them this work owes much in its formation.

In this research, I followed the method of documentation within the text, except when the documentation is cumbersome, or when there are additional remarks to be added, such documentation and comments are relegated to the footnotes.



PART ONE

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL IN JORDAN

CHAPTER ONE

AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The majority of the literary historians of the novel in Jordan usually consider the year 1967 as the starting point for serious production in the novel.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that there were no attempts at writing novels before that date as the earliest attempt goes back to 1922 when Muhammad Subḥī Abu Ghanīmāh published in Damascus *Aghānī al-Layl* (*Songs of the Night*) subtitled "A Collection of Literary, Social and Moral Stories". Some literary historians, however, date the first Jordanian novel to 1912 with 'Aqīl Abu al-Sha'ar's work entitled *al-Fatāh al-Armaniyyah fī Balāṭ Yaldiz*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Critics in Jordan differ on the date at which the Arabic novel in Jordan made its appearance. Their difference stems from the assumption each critic holds concerning the function he or she expects from a work of art. Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ, in his article "Laying the Foundations for the Modern Novel in Jordan," believes that the novel in Jordan began with Taysīr Sbūl's work, *Anta Mundhu al-Yawm*, and Amīn Shinnār's *al-Kābūs*, because "The

Despite all the works that appeared during the first half of the twentieth century, little critical attention was paid to them as they did not, in the view of most critics, meet the criteria of novelistic production. This is due partly to the history of the country in its political, social, economic and cultural aspects. This seems to confirm the Hegelian notion, as formulated by Georg Lukacs that literary genres "grow out of the concrete determinacy of the particular social and historical conditions. Their character, their peculiarity is determined

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fictional works preceding these two novelistic texts are in their historical context dead texts: They do not stimulate any reactions among the authors of subsequent works, nor do they stimulate imitation or emulation. They are isolated, inactive texts that are also qualitatively dragging behind novelistic texts published at the same time in The Arab world." Nazih Abu Nidāl believes that "The Jordanian novel movement was founded in its inclusive, complete and continuous form by the early eighties.", "Riwāt al-Thamānīnāt bayn al-Waqi'īyyah wa al-Ḥadāthah", in *al-Riwāyah al-Urdunīyyah Wa Mawqī'uha ala Khārīḡat al-Riwāyah al-'Arabiyyah*, Amman, Wizārah al-Thaqāfa, 1993. Khaled al-Karaki in his book, *al-Riwayah fi al-Urdun*, considers the year 1967 as the beginning of the novel in Jordan. He contends that "It managed to overcome its weakness in both form and content, thus qualifying for a position in the world of the 'Arabic novel."

4 Khaled al-Karaki quotes from *al-Qāfilah al-Mansiyyah* by Ya'qūb 'Awdāt a passage about 'Aqīl Abu al-Sha'ar (1893-1914), the Jordanian writer and thinker who obtained his Ph.D. in music and philosophy from The University of Rome. According to 'Awdāt, 'Aqīl wrote many articles and novels. He also translated many works into English, Arabic, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian and Turkish. He wrote novels that particularly concentrated on Arab morals, customs and past glories, according to 'Awdāt. The Jordanian writer, Hind Abu al-Sha'ar informed al-Karaki that 'Aqīl wrote a novel entitled *al-Fatātu al-Armantiyya fi Balāḡ Yaldiz* (The Armenian Girl in the Court at Yaldiz) for which he received a death sentence from The Ottoman Sultan in 1914. Another reference to 'Aqīl Abu al-Sha'ar is made by Shākir al-Nābulī in his article which he presented to The Symposium on The Jordanian Novel (1992). However, in spite of all these references to 'Aqīl Abu al-Sha'ar and his works, I did not find anything to confirm his production in Jordan or England.

by their capacity to give expression to the essential features of the given socio-historical phase”<sup>5</sup>

As an independent political entity, Jordan came into existence in 1921 with the arrival to East Jordan from Najd in the Arab Peninsula of Prince ‘Abdullah Ibn al-Ḥusayn, the founder of the Transjordan Emirate and later The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Prior to that, Jordan was considered geographically as part of The *wilāyat* of Syria, an area encompassing Palestine, modern-day Syria and parts of Lebanon, and for centuries under the political dominion of The Ottoman Empire. <sup>6</sup> With the creation of The East Jordan Emirate, Prince ‘Abdallah strove to give the country, besides its political entity, social, economic and cultural infrastructures. Nevertheless, the creation of such infrastructures required much more time than the creation of the political entity. In one of the literary histories of Jordan, the author presents a portrait of how the creation of the political identity was followed by steps towards the creation of a distinctive cultural one. Following the establishment of the Emirate, the author contends that:

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<sup>5</sup>Georg Lukacs, “Hegel’s Aesthetics,” in *Probleme der Asthetik Werke*, Vol. 10 9 (Neuwoied: Luchtarhand, 1969), p.118. Quoted in John Frow, *Marxism and Literary History*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.10.

<sup>6</sup>See Sulaymān al-Mūsa and Munīb al-Māḍī, *Tārīkh al-Urdun fī al-Qarn al-’Ishrīn (1900-1958)*. Amman, Maktabah al-Muḥtasib, 1959.

An ambitious educational programme began, and in the same year al-Salt School was established<sup>7</sup> and almost at the same time, the official weekly newspaper, *al-Sharq al-'Arabi*<sup>8</sup> made its appearance. King 'Abdullah (the prince at that time) who was known for his eloquence and great appreciation of literature, particularly poetry, participated with several prominent literary figures of East Jordan, such as, Muṣṭafā Wahbī al-Tal, Abu Ghanīmah, Fu'ād al-Khaṭīb, Muhammad Shaqīqī, Ḥusnī Zayd al-Kilānī, Taysīr Ḍabyān and Rux al-'Uzayzi<sup>9</sup> in an active literary movement ... that guided the country towards the world of creative writing ( al-Karaki, 1986: p.7).

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<sup>7</sup> al-Salt School is the first Public Secondary School established in The Emirate of East Jordan. It was the only secondary school in the whole country until the early thirties. Many of its graduates occupied senior positions in the country.

<sup>8</sup> In his book, *al-Qiṣah al-Qaṣīrah fī Filisṭīn Wal-Urdun (1850-1965)* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1981), pp. 89-90, Hāshim Yāghī quotes from Adīb Mruwwa's book on Arab Journalism and the beginning of the press in Jordan. He confirms that the first newspaper in Jordan was *al-Ḥaq Ya 'lū* which was issued in Ma'ān in the autumn of 1920 and later continued in Amman. However, the first official newspaper is *al-Sharq al-'Arabi* which was first issued in 1923. After three years it became *al-Jarīdah al-Rasmiyyah Liḥukūmat Sharq al-Urdun*. In 1946, and after Jordan won its independence, the newspaper was renamed as *al-Jarīdah al-Rasmiyyah li-l-Mamlakah al-Urduniyyah al-Hāshimiyyah* (*The Official Gazette of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*).

<sup>9</sup> For more information about these prominent figures of East Jordan, see Samīr Qaṭāmī, *al-Ḥarakah al-Adabiyyah fī Sharq al-Urdun Mundhu Qiyām al-Imārah Ḥatta 48*. Amman, Manshūrāt Wizārah al-Thaqāfah wal-Shabāb, 1981; 'Issā al-Nā'ūrī, *al-Ḥarakah al-Shi'riyyah fī al-Diffah al-Sharqiyyah min al-Mamlakah al-Urduniyyah al-Hāshimiyyah*. Amman, Manshūrāt Wizārah al-Thaqāfah wal-Shabāb, 1980. See also Usāmah Yūsuf Shihāb, *Ṣaḥīfah al-Jazīrah wa-Dawruha fī al-Ḥarakah al-Adabiyyah fī al-Urdun*. Amman, Manshūrāt Wizārah al-Thaqāfah, 1988. See also Muhammad al-Kurdī, *Nawābiḡh al-Urdun fī al-'Ahd al-Islāmi ma' Mullḥaq li-Rijālāt 'Ahd al-Imārah al-Urduniyyah*. Amman, Dar 'Ammar lil-Nashr, 1990.

This "world of creative writing" remained, to some extent, an unattainable objective during the first few decades after the establishment of the Emirate. This perhaps could be attributed to the immaturity of the yet emerging national identity of the country which was still in its formative stages, and whose social identity had not taken its final shape. The country contained different ethnic groups that lived in towns and villages, besides the indigenous population, each group maintaining its own social and cultural ties with its original homeland, thus being reluctant to merge with the other groups to form a new society. <sup>10</sup> A more complex social structure emerged in the wake of the events of 1948, when a large Palestinian exodus came to Jordan and the West Bank was subsequently merged within The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. <sup>11</sup>

Other factors that delayed literary production in Jordan during the early years of the twentieth century were the widespread illiteracy and the scarcity of schools, together with the absence of institutions of higher education and research centres. Under such difficult circumstances, the Jordanian writer had to produce his or her work, taking into consideration the limited readership, and the scarcity of printing and publishing centres. With all these handicaps in

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<sup>10</sup> In his discussion of the novel in Jordan, Nazīh Abu Niḍāl mentions that up till the late forties, "Amman was nothing more than a small town inhabited by groups of Sarcasians, Syrians, Palestinians, in addition to the indigenous population.", *op. cit.*, p.70.

<sup>11</sup> Shākir al-Nābulṣī contends in his article, "How The Novel In Jordan Expressed its Local and Arab Reality," *ibid.*, pp. 141-2 that with the unity of the two banks of The River Jordan, "there appeared in the East Bank a new social structure. In the past, it was a simple social structure, but then it became more intricately complex to a certain extent."

operation, together with the instability of the region under the British mandate (1920-1948), it is difficult to expect a literary renaissance, particularly in the genre of the novel which is in itself a newcomer to the Arab world as a whole.

## I. Early Attempts (1922-1948)

In spite of all the difficult circumstances under which Jordanian writers had to labour, particularly during the twenties and thirties of this century, several attempts were made by Jordanian writers to produce novels. In the early thirties, Adīb Ramaḍān published his work, *Ayna al-Rajul*<sup>12</sup>, (*Where is the Man*). He called his work a novel which aimed at exposing social injustices. The work presents a simple critique of the behaviour of the upper class in Jordan at that time. It is the story of a man searching for his missing brother who subsequently joined the police force in Amman, where he came to establish a love relationship with a girl from the upper class. Faced with the disapproval of the girl's parents, the policeman suddenly disappears. What is important about this work is the documentary information about that period, including photographs of high ranking officials. Artistically, however, the work is very simple. It is the first attempt at writing a novel in Jordan and is closer to a popular tale written in flawed *Fuṣḥa* Arabic, without any development in character or plot, consisting of a continuous narration of

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<sup>12</sup>Adīb Ramaḍān, *Ayna al-Rajul* or *Jarā'im al-Māl*. Damascus, Dār al-Ṭibā'ah al-'Arabiyyah, 1928-1933.

events in a successive manner, and generally lacking in its characterisation and narrative technique.

In 1937, Rux Ibn Za'id al-'Uzayzi published *Abna'u al-Ghasāsinah Wa-Ibrāhīm Bāsha*<sup>13</sup> (*The Ghassānid Sons and Ibrahim Pasha*) which narrates the events of 1837 in al-Karak. It presents Sheikh Ḍmūr's sacrifice of his two sons, taken hostages by Ibrahim Pasha, for the sake of the city. The choice presented to the Sheikh was either to hand the city over to Ibrahim Pasha and save the lives of his two sons, or to resist and consequently have his two sons burnt before his eyes. The work cannot be described as a novel, although the possibility of structuring a whole novel out of the events is there, as al-Karaki observes,

al-'Uzayzi has a strong command of the language, and can enrich the novelistic reality by his knowledge of the culture, dialect and customs of his country, together with his great experience (1986: p.18).

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<sup>13</sup> Jerusalem: Maṭba'ah Sayyidat Filisṭīn, 1937. Rux al-'Uzayzī published his work in a new collection entitled *Waṭaniyyah Khalidah wa-Azahīr al-Ṣaḥra'* (An Immortal Patriotism and the Flowers of the Desert) Sidon: Maṭba'ah al-'Irfān, 1954.

In the early 1940s, Taysir Zubyān serialised his work, *Ayn Ḥumāh al-faḍīla*<sup>14</sup> (*Where are the Defenders of Virtue*) in the newspaper *al-Jazīra*. In his work, Zubyān presents a problem of a social nature. Abjad, a young, poor beautiful, girl is being courted by a rich middle-aged, man. The main issue begins when the poor girl rejects his proposal, especially after discovering that he is married. However, this work is considered by many critics to be the earliest attempt at writing a social novel in Jordan.<sup>15</sup>

The first autobiographical work by a Jordanian writer is *Dhikrayāt*<sup>16</sup> (*Memories*) by Shukri Sha'sha'a in 1945. In this work, Sha'sha'a attempts to emulate Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's style in *al-Ayyām* (*The Days*). This work is close to a

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<sup>14</sup> Taysir Zubyān published his novel in 1958 under the title, *Ayn Ḥumā al-Faḍīlah: Mudhakkirāt Fatātah 'Arabiyyah Shāridah*, under the pen-name Miss Abjad (*Where are The Defenders of Virtue: The Memoirs of a Homeless Arab Girl*). Amman: Maṭba'ah al-Sharikah al-Ṣinā'iyyah, 1958. He also published another story which he serialised in *al-Jazīrah* newspaper entitled *Mudhakkirāt Ṭālib Thānawī* (*Memoirs of a Secondary School Student*).

<sup>15</sup> Shākir al-Nābulṣī argues that Zubyān's work is a didactic one, mainly concerned with social questions. *al-Riwayah al-Urduniyyah Wamawqī'uha Ala Khārīṭat al-Riwayah al-'Arabiyyah*, p.139. Khalid al-Karaki considers Zubyān's work as "The first work dealing with a social question in Jordan." (al-Karaki: 1986, 19). He also notes that "The pleading technique which the author employs, together with the memoirs give the work some basic narrative elements that are immature in terms of character development, the flow of events and the language." (al-Karaki: 1986, 19).

<sup>16</sup> Shukrī Sha'sha'ah, *Dhikrayāt* (Amman: Maṭba'ah al-Istiqlāl, 1945). He also published another story in 1957 entitled *fi Ṭuruq al-Zamān* (*In the Roads of Time*) (Amman: Maṭba'ah al-Maktabah al-Waṭaniyyah, 1957) which is structured on a premeditated idea about moral values and has stereotypical characters that do not develop.



novel in terms of narrative technique, although, artistically, it cannot be described as a novel. As al-Karaki observes,

It is not a novel in artistic terms, but rather images from life, ...  
It also contains social criticism from an observer's point of view without the ability to analyse, apart from a few situations, such as the ruler's visit to the Sheikh (1986: p.22).

In this work, we also come across a picture of the educational system during the early years of the 20th century in the area under the Ottoman Empire. The work could have become an investigation of the Arab situation during the first two decades of this century, and could have become the first artistic biographical novel in Jordan through the same characters which the author employs.

## II. A Period of Transition (1948-1967)

If the early attempts at writing novel in Jordan did not succeed in producing novels of high artistic value, they have succeeded in introducing the idea of the novel into the literary trends among the writers in the country. Because the novel as a genre is new to the whole Arab world when compared, for instance, with poetry, and because the Jordanian people were still in search of their cultural identity, the time was not yet ripe for the production of the novel which is an expression of social, cultural, political and economic spheres of a country. In 1946, Jordan won its independence and became The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan under the late King 'Abdallah . Following the events of 1948 in Palestine, and in the wake of the Jericho Conference in 1950, the West Bank of the River Jordan merged with the East Bank becoming part of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. With this unity, a large number of Palestinians were integrated into the population of Jordan, either through acquiring citizenship on account of their origin as inhabitants of the West Bank, or because of their emigration from the rest of Palestine to either of the banks of the River Jordan. The events that followed in the area had a great impact on Jordan, particularly that the fifties and the sixties of this century were a period of unrest politically and socially.

Several important factors helped to enhance national awareness among the people of the Arab world: the spread of education, the growth of cities and the arrival of a cultured elite all contributed to the rapid social changes that were taking place in the area as a whole, and in Jordan in particular. The West presented to the cultured classes a dichotomy of contradictory implications: on the one hand, it represented an example of progress in thought and literature which the Jordanian cultured class were striving to emulate; on the other hand,

the West represented, by its colonial policies, an intractable enemy of Arab nationalism which was rapidly spreading among the people. Other factors that had their impact on the literary production were the establishment of a press which represented both official and private points of view; the translation of many literary and ideological works from different languages into Arabic also brought Arab intellectuals closer to the international arena of thought. The Jordanian cultured class became divided in its beliefs and approaches to life, and many Jordanians joined national and international parties that had in many cases conflicting ideologies, thus bringing an additional schism into the newly-formed social structure.

In 1962, The University of Jordan was established, and for the first time in the history of the country, young people had the chance of obtaining higher education inside the country. This meant that contact between young people in Jordan and other Arab youths was somewhat reduced, especially since in neighbouring Arab countries, anti-Western trends were growing rapidly as a result of the continuous support of the West to the Israeli aggression on Arab countries and their direct involvement in some instances. In addition, many Arab countries were still fighting the war of their independence against Western colonial powers, mainly France and Britain, thus providing substance for the massive propaganda directed by Egypt during that period through (*Ṣawt al-ʿArab*) Radio. Another important factor played a significant role in creating a literary atmosphere in the country, namely the issuing of several literary journals that offered writers opportunities to publish their work. Thus literary movements in Jordan began to take shape, although at that stage they were still imitations of similar movements in other

neighbouring Arab states. As for the novel, it oscillated at this stage between two major trends: the "realistic" trend, an extension of the trend dominant in the formative stages of the Arabic novel; and the romantic trend, affected by the popular taste, that attempted to create romantic love stories and tragedies. However, the boundaries between these two trends were not clear-cut, and in many cases the two overlapped and intermingled within the same work.

It should be mentioned here that one of the major disadvantages literary production suffered during the two stages mentioned above was the insufficient critical evaluation or guidance written as a response to this creative writing. In fact, little critical attention was paid to literary works in Jordan. Critics, on the whole, engaged themselves in discussing the traditional/classical Arabic literary genre, poetry, while offering little space or time, to the new genres. As Shakir al-Nābulsi observes,

These writers who produced their first works and gave up writing at a later stage, were driven to despair by several reasons,- one of which was the absence of a critical evaluation and a critical reaction to what they wrote. They were writing, as though for themselves<sup>17</sup>.

### (A) Works of The "Realistic" Trend

Many of the works produced during the early period concentrated on national and social themes. The Palestinian plight formed the main theme of

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<sup>17</sup>Shakir al-Nābulsi, *op. cit.* p.149.

most of these works. One of the earliest works of this stage that has a form similar to that of a novel is 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 'Abbās's work, *Fatāh min Filisṭīn*<sup>18</sup> (*A Young Woman from Palestine*) which portrays the life of a Palestinian family during the period preceding the events of 1948 and the impact of these events on its life. The work describes how that family was forced to move from Ḥaifa to al-Lud, then to Ramalla and ultimately to Amman. Al-Karaki finds that

this work is probably the first long story written in Jordan that has a novelistic structure, without being sufficiently developed to become a successful work (1986: p.29).

In 1957, Muhammad Sa'īd al-Junaydi (1930-) published his work, *Shams al-Ghurūb*<sup>19</sup> (*The Twilight Sun*). Its main theme is human suffering, oppression and exploitation by both local and foreign forces, and it is an attempt on the author's part to emulate Ṭahā Ḥusayn's style in *Mu'adhdhabūn fī al-Ard* (*The Tormented on Earth*). This work tells the story of a young man who left his village for the city in search of education. The plot centres around his experiences during his three-year stay in the city, and manages to reveal the exploitative relation that exists between the peasants and money lenders. The story also refers to the British presence in the region, and focuses on its exploitative nature, particularly in relation to the natural wealth of the Arab World, specifically oil. It also presents a romantic love affair that

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<sup>18</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 'Abbās, *Fatāh Min Filisṭīn* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1948).

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Sa'īd al-Junaydī, *Shams al-Ghurūb* (Amman: Manshūrāt al-Ruwwād, 1957).

appears unlikely to take place in the type of society the work depicts.

Nevertheless, the work itself is a bold cry against oppression and exploitation, and an earnest plea for the respect of human dignity and human rights. As one critic observes

This work which has been burdened by the romantic description of nature, the explicit description of misery, and the direct attack on exploitation presents an author consciously aligning himself with the poor, sacrificing much of his art in terms of narrative technique and character development for the sake of the clarity of his position. Despite all this, al-Junaydi represents a promising talent in the art of the novel ( al-Karaki, 1986: p.36).

In 1955, Sulaymān al-Mashīnī published his work, *Sabīl al-Khalāṣ*<sup>20</sup> (*The Way for Salvation*) which is a story with a simple plot based on coincidences, with a design that leads to a tragic end. The work in one sense aims at social criticism, although it contains elements of the romantic and sentimental. The author seems to be preoccupied with the idea of moral justice to the extent that he resorts to direct moralising. As al-Karaki notes,

One of the major defects of the work is its engagement in condemning moral corruption, at the expense of character development and structural maturity. The tragedy is not artistically justified, although it extends to touch upon significant social ailments, and documents social injustices and maladies. The work contains long, descriptive passages that are irrelevant to the text artistically, such as the description of the

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<sup>20</sup> Sulaymān al-Mashīnī, *Sabīl al-Khalāṣ* (Amman: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah al-'Arabiyyah, 1955).

green plains, the shepherds and the hard-working peasants, while the events take place in the city. As for the coincidences that seem well-fitted in the story, they are greatly exaggerated and cannot be understood or explained within the world of the work itself. They exist only to serve the moral purport which the author seems to advocate (1986: p.38).

A work that betrays greater artistic awareness on its author's part is *Mughāmarāt Tā'ibah*<sup>21</sup> (*Adventures of a Penitent Woman*) by Ḥusni Freiz. In this work we are presented with the main character, Dalila, who repents after leading a life of prostitution. Nevertheless, the way of life she chooses to lead is an exciting, adventurous one. The work presents a view of critical realism that points to the injustices, without attempting to analyse their causes or provide remedies. Social and humanitarian issues are brought forward through the protagonist whose home becomes a shelter for people with all sorts of personal crises.

In a quite different vein from that of Freiz or Abbas, 'Īssa al-Nā'ūrī published in 1955 the first work in Jordan that is based on a myth and has a particular symbolic implication. *Mars Yuḥriq Mu'iddātih*<sup>22</sup> (*Mars Burns his Equipment*). This is a work based on ancient Roman mythology, intended to launch an assault on the advocates of war and condemn it. The setting of al-Na'ūrī's work is in two ancient Roman villages near Rome. The most important thing about this work is its unconventionality in theme at a time

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<sup>21</sup> Ḥusni Freiz, *Mughamaratu Ta'iba* (Amman: Maṭba'ah Dār al-Fikr, 1980) 2nd edition.

when the fever of anti-colonialism was at its peak. The language employed by al-Na'ūri performs a role of providing a natural landscape of ancient civilisation, countryside and war. al-Na'ūri employs events and characters to highlight his idea which centres on the pricelessness of the human individual, the glorification of patriotism and the readiness to sacrifice those dearest in defence of one's homeland, no matter what the outcome may be.

In the same vein in which Abbas wrote, 'Issa al-Na'ūri wrote his second novel, *Bayt Warā' al-Hudūd*<sup>22</sup> (*A Home Behind the Borders*). However, in spite of the title's suggestion of a national care, the work hardly touches on that issue. The events in this work relate to the lives of two Palestinian families in Jaffa, and their travelling to Lebanon. It also touches on some themes, such as the children's love of music and the awakening of a virgin love in their hearts. The same characters of this work reappear again in a third work by al-Na'ūri in 1967. *Jirāḥ Jadīdah* (New Wounds) which was published a month after the 1967 war is apparently a spontaneous response to the impact of the Arab defeat in that war. The characters and ideas in this work are not developed sufficiently. Ibrāhīm al-Sa'afīn observes in his commentary on 'Issa al-Na'ūri's works by saying that they reveal his views, and adds that

His own culture, knowledge, behaviour and speech are imposed on his characters. The overall perspective from which al-Na'ūri sets out is a romantic one that does not always manifest itself in a coherent form, but in many cases, it rather appears in

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<sup>22</sup> 'Issa al-Nā'ūrī, *Mars Yuḥriq Mu'iddātih* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1955).

<sup>23</sup> 'Issa al-Nā'ūrī, *Bayt Wara' al-Hudūd* (Beirut: 'Uweidat Publications, 1959).



disconnected, associative images that issue from his desire to have direct command on the components of his artistic structure and particularly his characters<sup>24</sup>.

Among the writers in this trend during the fifties, is a woman who produced one work which showed a promising talent. Maryam Mash'al published *Fatat al-Nakba*<sup>25</sup> (*The Young Woman of the National Setback*) in 1955 while she was still a girl at school. In spite of the fact that the work was simple in its plot, and the direct style of presenting the characters, it betrays a gift for writing. Al-Karaki says about Mash'al's work:

This work, despite its romanticism, contains good descriptive passages and seeds of realism that can be included among works of documentary realism (1986: p.46).

In 1960, Maḥmūd 'Abdu Freiḥat published his work, *Ajniḥat al-Amal*<sup>26</sup> (*Wings of Hope*) which contains the elements of a tragedy. The work, however, suffers from one major flaw which is the excessive use of poetic quotations and moralising. Works like Frayḥāt's did not acquire a depth

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<sup>24</sup>Ibrāhīm al-Sa'afīn, "al-Bidāyāt," in *al-Riwayah al-Urduniyyah wa-Mawqī'uha 'Ala Kharīṭat al-Riwayah al-'Arabiyyah* (Amman: Wizārah al-Thaqāfah, 1993), p.29.

<sup>25</sup>Although the exact date of the publication of this work is not clear, there is some reference to a period that makes it possible to place it among the works that appeared in the mid-fifties. On the title page, the authoress puts the following dedication: "To Jamīlah bu Ḥayrid, Jean D'Arc of The Arabs from a Palestinian student who is from a village near Tel Aviv." (Amman: Maṭba'ah al-Sha'b, n.d.).

<sup>26</sup>Maḥmūd 'Abdūh Frayḥāt, *Ajniḥatul Amal* (Amman: Maṭba'ah al-Sharikah al-Shīnā'iyyah, 1960). Maḥmūd al-Afghānī, the well-known Palestinian poet wrote its introduction. In it he praises the work and finds it "a real expression of The Palestinian suffering and the hope of restoring their rights."

in perspective as far as the Palestinian tragedy is concerned, although they were produced more than a decade after its occurrence.

The lack of profound analysis in these works and their artistic immaturity deprived them of the opportunity to become the early novels of value in Jordan.

## (B) The Sentimental or Romantic Trend

During this stage of transition, there appeared works that can be considered mainly as sentimental. These works suffered on the whole from the same shortcomings that the other group of the "Realistic" trend laboured under. All were direct and explicit in their messages, with an ineffective style, immature character delineation and narrative techniques. The most negative aspect of this group, one may claim, relates to their themes. They lack seriousness, and in many cases, they border on triviality. The moralising feature detracts still further from their value and gives them a boring monotony that deprives them of any qualification to be classified as novels. In many cases, their characters seem unfamiliar and strange.

One of these works is *Al-Qublah al-Muḥarramah*<sup>27</sup> (*The Forbidden Kiss*) by Ṣubḥī al-Maṣrī. This story presents the dilemma of a young man who is pursued by his step-mother who is infatuated with him, and seizes every

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<sup>27</sup> Ṣubḥī al-Maṣrī, *al-Qublah al-Muḥarramah* (Beirut: Maṭba'ah Maktabah al-Ḥayāh, 1959).

opportunity to take a kiss from her step-son, and to establish an illicit relation with him. As al-Karaki rightly observes,

This work does not go beyond the sentimental tragedy which is simple and naive in its structure and content, and does not achieve artistic maturity or a critical perspective (1986: p.49).

Similar works that are lacking in artistic vision, are such works as Nu'mān Sa'īd Abu 'Aysheh's, *Wā Hayfa*<sup>28</sup> (*Oh, Haifa*), Maḥmūd 'Uwayḍa's *Ṣirā' fī al-Qalb* (*Conflict in the Heart*), and Mishael al-Haj's *al-Rajul Aladhī Wajad Niṣfah*<sup>29</sup> (*The Man who Found his Other Half*). In the last work, the author's inability to convey the message through the novel compelled him to state it explicitly at the end of his work.

A work, however, that comes close to being a novel is *Min Zawāyā al-'Adam*<sup>30</sup> (*From The Corners of Nothingness*) by Kamil Ḥamid al-Milkawī. In this work, the author's mastery of the narrative technique is quite evident. He employs the omniscient narrator and begins this narrative from a point close to its end, and then unravels the whole story. Nevertheless, al-Karaki makes the comment that, "In this work, there is directness in the narration, and a strong affinity to al-Manfalūṭi's style of arousing sympathy and pity. The

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<sup>28</sup> Nu'man Sa'īd Abu 'Aysheh, *Wa Hayfa* (Beirut: Maṭba'ah Ma'tūq wa-Ikhwān, n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Mishael al-Hāj, *al-Rajul Alladhī Wajad Niṣfah* (Amman: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah wal-Nashr, 1962). He also has a collection of short stories entitled *al-Majnūn Ya 'shaq al-Mawt* which was published in 1955.

<sup>30</sup> Kāmil Ḥamid al-Milkāwī, *Min Zawāyā al-'Adam* (Amman: Maṭba'ah al-Sharikah al-Ṣinā'iyyah al-Tijāriyyah, 1960).

illogicality of the coincidences, the excessive interference of the author, and his direct empathy with his characters and his preaching make the work closer to a well-made tale which arouses curiosity, rather than a novel" (1986: 55).

Al-Milkāwī wrote another story entitled, *'Ibrat al-Qadar*<sup>31</sup> (*The Warning of Fate*) which is written in a moralising style, and is a passionate appeal to peoples' conscience, being dedicated to all fathers aiming at showing their paternal feelings towards their children. Muhammad 'Aṭiyyāt says about this work:

The poor command of the language on the author's part is obvious to the reader. It is very much similar to *Ayn Ḥumāh al-Faḍīlah* by Taysīr Zubayān in both form and content ('Aṭiyyāt, 1978: 79-82).

### III. The Dawn of the Mature Novel in Jordan (1968-1979)

If Roger Allen believes that the Arabic novel in general "has achieved its true maturity and its sense of identity since the Second World War" (1982: p.9), the novel in Jordan needed two further decades to achieve the same standard of maturity. The Arab defeat of 1967 had a profound traumatic effect on the Arab people as a whole, and in particular on the intellectuals. They began to question and investigate the validity of their beliefs, and to attempt to understand the causes of this horrifying defeat. The defeat revealed the

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<sup>31</sup>Kāmil Ḥāmid al-Milkāwī, *'Ibrat al-Qadar* (Amman: Maṭābi' al-Sharikah al-Ṣinā'iyyah, 1960).

hollowness of the slogans that were current during the previous years and their failure to meet the hopes and aspirations of the nation.

Besides the military and political impact of the 1967 defeat, it also had its social and cultural repercussions. On the social level, huge numbers of Palestinians and other Arab nationals either fled or were forced to leave the Occupied Territories. In Jordan, large numbers of Palestinians settled after the war - especially since the inhabitants of the West Bank were considered Jordanians and expected to be treated as such. However, it was not an easy task to accommodate the vast number of refugees, particularly since the country was still suffering from the immediate aftermath of defeat.

This change in social structure brought about many changes in values and moral standards. It also contributed to the already unstable social fabric of the country which was still taking shape. On the literary scene, a wide-ranging debate took place on the pages of literary journals and in newspapers on the causes of the appalling defeat, and the press became the battlefield whereupon conflicting ideologies and attitudes could meet. Poets felt the need to leave their previous traditional preoccupation, and address themselves in particular to the catastrophe of 1967. One of these poets was Nizar Qabbani who was known as the love poet *par excellence*, wrote a long poem addressing the defeat which gave rise to a wide range of discussion and dispute over its themes and content<sup>32</sup>. Scepticism was the dominant trait of almost all

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<sup>32</sup>Nizār Qabbānī's poem, "Hawāmish 'ala Daftar al-Naksah," (Footnotes to the Setback Notebook) was received by a mixed response by literary circles at that time. Qabbānī

intellectuals of that period. They became disillusioned with the ideology of nationalism, began to question its validity, and search for a new refuge in either traditional thought or Marxism. Thus Arab nationalism, retreated and gave its place either to Islam or Marxism. Other intellectuals resorted to French Existentialism, or even in some instances to anti-social thought.

As for the novel, it appeared during the first few years that followed the war of 1967 to concentrate on a diagnosis of the Arab state of affairs that led to the tragic end. Thus we find a host of writers who either directly or indirectly tackled the theme of the events of 1967, attempting to propose remedies for the malaise of the nation. It is therefore possible to apply the term "June-war-related novels" to all the works that appeared following the 1967 defeat.

### *The June-War-Related Novels*

Almost immediately after the Arab defeat in 1967, 'Issa al-Na'ūrī published his work, *Jirāḥ Jadīdah*<sup>33</sup> (*New Wounds*) which is a sequel to his first piece, *Bayt warā' al-Ḥudūd*, by making the same characters participate in the events of the new work and suffer from the aftermath of the war. However, this work does not reveal a new insight into the events, but presents a rather

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himself was not allowed to enter Egypt for a long time after publishing this poem, and he was exposed to violent criticism by the Egyptian press.

<sup>33</sup>'Issa al-Na'ūrī, *Jirāḥ Jadīdah* (Beirut: Dār al-Siyāḥah, 1967).

spontaneous response to the tragedy that occurred. It could be regarded as a documentary work, rather than an artistic one.

Of quite a similar nature were the works of 'Aṭiyyah Muhammad 'Aṭiyyah and Aḥmad 'Uwayyid al-'Abbadi whose works are more or less an expression of common ideas that were current during that period. In his work, *al-Dam w al-Turāb*,<sup>34</sup> (Earth and Blood), 'Aṭiyyah Muhammad 'Aṭiyyah attempts to portray the Palestinian suffering and their ultimate migration from their land. The work starts by presenting the Palestinian resistance which began in 1936 with the anti-British demonstrations and strikes, and goes on through the British Mandate, and until the war of 1967. This portrayal is presented through the suffering of three generations of one family that had undergone this ordeal. The character of 'Abdallah, who participated in the battle of *al-Karamah* in 1968, is given a symbolic implication that may stand for the Palestinian people. The events focus on the third generation represented by 'Abdallah who lives in Kuwait as a nurse where he falls in love with a patient who suffers from TB, but his family decides that he should get married to his cousin. The defeat of his love is coupled with the Arab defeat of 1967. As a result he loses all his family in Palestine and his brothers in Kuwait. The work is of a simplistic nature and lacking in artistic qualities.

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<sup>34</sup>'Aṭiyyah Muhammad 'Aṭiyyah, *al-Dam wal-Turāb* (Amman: N.P.), 1970.

As for the second work, *Ālām Nāziḥah*<sup>35</sup> (*The Suffering of a Displaced Woman*), it mainly refers the present Arab defeat and migration from Palestine to a much earlier date than the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It finds its origins in the Middle Ages when the Arabs were forced to depart from Spain, and the confrontations that occurred between them and the Crusaders and Mongols during that period. The story presents the situation of Farīdah, a fifty-year-old woman and her family prior to the June war of 1967, the events of which led to her departure to the East Bank of Jordan, and the suffering she and other people had to endure. The work is direct and explicit in its message, and the character of Farīdah, the protagonist, does not present a literary symbol, nor does the character of Maḥmūd her son.

Three important works figure prominently among The June-War-related novels and play an important role in terms of their influence on the novel in Jordan. These are the works of Taysīr Sbūl, Amīn Shinnār and Salem al-Naḥḥās. The three writers received massive critical attention in both Jordan and the Arab world,<sup>36</sup> because their works provide a vision that is based on ideology.

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<sup>35</sup> Aḥmad 'Uwayyid al-'Abbādī, *Ālām Nāziḥah* (Beirut: Maṭba'ah al-Inṣāf, 1969).

<sup>36</sup> See Ilyas Khūrī, *Tajrubat al-Baḥth 'An Ufuq* (Beirut: Markiz Abḥāth Munazamat al-Taḥrīr al-Filistīniyya, 1974), p.75 ff. Shukri Madi, *In'ikas Hazimat Huzayran 'ala al-Riwayah al-'Arabiyyah* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasāh al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1978). See also Sa'īd Yaqṭīn, *Taḥlīl al-Khiṭāb al-Riwa'i* (Beirut: al-Dār al-Bayḍā', al-Markiz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 1989).



Taysir Sbül's *Ant Mundh al-Yawm*<sup>37</sup> (*You Are Since Today*)

In 1968, Taysir Sbül published his novel, *Ant Mundh al-Yawm* (*You are Since Today*) which presented an unconventional work in terms of form and content. The novel presents, through the character of 'Arabi, a vision of the factors that brought about the Arab defeat in June 1967. In this work, the oppressive social, political and ideological forces are exposed through the network of relations presented in 'Arabi's family and his connections with a political party. In a social context, males oppress females, and exploit them both sexually and economically. 'Arabi's father beats his mother, pulls out the goat's tongue and controls his home through terror. Similarly, governments control their people through the use of force and terror. The leaflets which the party distributes are boring and redundant. But this terror and exploitation, according to the novel, go back to early history, when Abu al-Qāsim, the famous Arab general who conquered India, was brutally killed by the Caliph in Damascus. As Ghassān 'Abd al-Khāliq rightly observes,

the central thesis from which the novel *Ant Mundh al-Yawm* sets out is the disclosure of the historical basis for the social establishment starting from the family as being the primary unit responsible for the production, rationalisation and perpetuation of the suppressive forms of patriarchy. These descending from above downwards across the institutional pyramid to the base, through the use of violence which is directed downwards and the fear that rises upwards. This bloody mechanism is the closed circuit in which society in the present and the past bears

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<sup>37</sup> Taysir Sbül, *Ant Mundh al-Yawm* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968).

the responsibility for spreading the germs of defeat and reproducing them through hundreds of years<sup>38</sup>.

In his novel, Taysīr Sbūl does not specifically state his ideological project, but rather presents it in the form of 'Arabi's memoirs. The portrait of a disjointed social, political, cultural reality underscores the objectives he desires to attain, and at the same time provides a parallel discourse that invalidates and destabilises the common assumptions of the dominant social and political ideologies within the world of the novel. This is mainly achieved through different narrative techniques adopted in the work which draws an analogy between the vague artistic structure of the novel and the indeterminacy of the Arab status quo.

Another means for expressing the historical dimension is the synchronisation of the past with the present, a process that reveals an uninterruptedness of the negative aspects that are prevalent in the social and political despotic hierarchies that control the whole Arab world, beginning with the smallest social unit and ending with the whole state structure. The thin layer that isolates reality from illusion no longer exists within the grotesque world creative in the novel. 'Arabi is haunted by the nightmarish terror from his father, while his real dreams turn out to be real nightmares where he experiences the most horrible events. As Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ points out: "The relation between son and father, between father and animals, between father and mother, between son and party and the son (the narrator) and

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<sup>38</sup>Ghasān 'Abd al-Khaliq, "Madkhal ila al-Riwayah al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Urdun," in *al-Riwayah al-Urduniyyah*, p.63.

'Ā'ishah are all suppressive and authoritarian; restrictive to liberties. Such relations lead to nothing, apart from the sense of futility, extinction and nakedness which, the sight of the yellow, half-naked trees stimulates in us".<sup>39</sup>

The work as a whole represents the anarchic state of the Arab nation, a state of repression, suppression and inhibition that culminates in the world of the novel with 'Arabi's nightmares in which he sees himself transformed into a yellow fluid: "something resembling vomit or something causing nausea" (Sbūl, 1968: 9); or the incestuous dreams that his comrade in the party experiences, an expression of the extreme despondency and repression that the Arabs communities suffer and tolerate. It is this absurd condition that the Arab societies undergo on both the collective and individual levels that led to the horrifying defeat.

What characterises the world of Sbūl's novel is the inertia and stagnation that are reflected in almost every feature of the experiences the protagonist and his world undergo. In fact, the reader encounters little action in the novel, apart from acts of terror and oppression which are narrated by the protagonist, either as scenes he had witnessed, or events told by another character. It is, one is led to think, a reflection of the stagnant Arab history, through centuries, that never seems to change. The narrative techniques which Sbūl employs in his novels is not a fixed one. In some places we find the omniscient narrator revealing the most intimate thoughts of the character. In

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<sup>39</sup>Fakhri Šālih, "al-Ta'sīs lil-Riwayah al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Urdun," *ibid* p.44.

other places, however, the character himself narrates events or incidents that he had seen or experienced. We also find internal monologues and a semi-stream of consciousness in presenting thoughts and events through temporal intervals that spread across history in a synchronic way that shatters the chronology of time or even annuls it. This technical device is, as Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ notes,

a narrative device that enables the author to put on trial the family, the party, the state, society and the individual without being obliged to present a reading of each of the implied social levels individually (ibid, p.44).

It is through this disconnection which Sbūl presents in the structure of his novel that he practically reflects the fracture within the consciousness of the Arab intelligentsia after the defeat.

### Sālim al-Naḥḥās's *Awṛāq 'Āqir*<sup>40</sup> (*Memoirs of a Barren Woman*)

The Arab defeat in June 1967 is given the expression of a false pregnancy in Sālim al-Naḥḥās's work, *Awraq 'Āqir* (*Memoirs of a Barren Woman*). The assumptions about the cause of sterility are inaccurate and the Bedouin man is sterile, while his wife Umayya is as fertile as the Ghor Valley.<sup>41</sup> The suffering and torment which Umayya endures can only come

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<sup>40</sup> Salem al-Naḥḥās, *Awraq 'Āqir* (Beirut: Dar al-Itihād, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> The Ghor is that area of West Jordan that spreads on the East and West banks of The River Jordan, and is known for its exceptional fertility.

to an end by the birth of Ya'rub, the hope of their old age and the dream of their life. The journeys they undertake in their quest for medicine are no less futile, since the doctors are not sincere in their help. They are either real doctors who are not concerned with the treatment of the Bedouin's sterility, or uneducated, superstitious quacks who resort to unrealistic treatments that yield nothing. These doctors represent, as Ghassān 'Abd al-Khāliq observes, the Arab regimes who were insincere in their treatment of the Palestinian question (ibid, p.64).

The work does not dissociate itself from Arabic novels that were written in other Arab countries. It is consistent with the "realist" form that is employed by other Arab writers, and has a strong affinity with Naguib Mahfouz's *Awlād Ḥārītā* and Fathī Ghānim's *Tilk al-Ayyām*.

*Al-Nahḥās*'s novel occupies a middle place between Sbūl's work, *Ant Mundh al-Yawm*, and Amīn Shinnār's work, *al-Kabūs*, which will be discussed later. While Sbūl examines in his work the history of the Arab nation through the exposition of terror, oppression and exploitation that have constantly characterised Arab history, Amīn Shinnār's work reveals that our present age is the most degrading period of all history. The past presents a brighter vision than the present; and the only means available for overcoming present problems is through returning to ancestral ideology. *al-Nahḥās*, however, does not lament the past, nor glorify it, but finds the remedy in the existence of a sincere and responsible political body that can diagnose the disease and prescribe the right medication for its treatment.

## Amīn Shinnār's *al-Kābūs*<sup>42</sup> (*The Nightmare*)

Amīn Shinnār's work, *al-Kbāūs* (*The Nightmare*) (1968) is a vision based on the return to Islam as an ideology, and attempts to explain the defeat of June 1967 accordingly. The novel contains two plots that undercut the dominant historical interpretation of events on the assumption that the Arabs have abandoned their ideology and adopted in Western ideologies instead. This abandonment of ideology led to the current defeat. To elucidate his symbolic message, Shinnār produces a mythical construction that appears ambiguous at the beginning. This ambiguity is gradually dispelled through the establishment of an internal novel within the world of his novel. The parallelism that is created between the two levels of the two-fold story reveals the underlying discourse that attempts to criticise the dominant ideologies of the external world through the emphasis on the validity of the internal ideology contained within the work itself.

The conflict within Shinnār's work is that of different forms of one ideal, i.e., the return to the "great old man", an expression of the relationship between present day Arabs and their ancestral ideology, and the comparisons and contrasts lie only within the different levels of this belief in terms of its strength or weakness. There is within this variety of belief the character of the grandfather whose belief is simple and naive. There is also one character,

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<sup>42</sup> Amīn Shinnār, *al-Kabūs* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār lil-Nashr, 1968).



Farahāt, whose faith is constantly changing. But the summit of faith is presented in the character of 'Awdah whose name signifies the ideological message of the whole work, the return. As Elias Khūrī notes in his book, *Tajrlbah al-Baḥth 'an Ufuq*,

Shinnār's novel strives to explain the defeat through historical reality and in this sense, it is an ambitious novel; and in his quest for communicating its objectives the author resorts to deducing history in a symbolic manner within the framework of a narrative discourse (1974: 79).

In 1975, Mufīd Naḥla published his long story, *al-Raḥīl*<sup>43</sup> (*Departure*) which presents the Palestinian departure that began in 1948 and the subsequent events that led to the second exodus of 1967. The story presents the occupation of Jaffa starting with the Jewish waves of migration to the city under the British mandate and the subsequent downfall of the city. It encompasses two generations of Palestinians represented by Zayd al-Ḥāmid and his wife, Zaynab, and the second generation represented by their son Fāris who was born after 1948 and knew his right to his city, Jaffa, instinctively, and by force of logic. Fāris begins his life by carrying out excavations that confirm his right to his homeland starting from the early historical times of the Canaanites up till the present day.

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<sup>43</sup> Mufīd Naḥleh, *al-Raḥīl* (Amman: Maṭba'ah al-'Ummāl al-Ta'āwuniyyah, 1975).

The work presents the second migration from Palestine following the defeat of 1967. After being disillusioned by the bitter realities of the ebb of national feeling in Amman, Damascus and Cairo, Fāris decides to return to the homeland in an opposite migration. In the company of another old man, 'Abd al-Ghafūr, he attempts to cross the border between Jordan and the occupied homeland. Fāris manages to infiltrate the border, despite the occupation forces that are concentrated in the area, while 'Abd al-Ghafūr, the symbol of an earlier generation, fails to do so. The story, however, ends in Fāris's death at the hands of some Israeli soldiers while he was lying in the arms of the Canaanite goddess 'Ay. As al-Karaki observes, the novel depicts a possible solution for the Palestinian people through returning to their country, even if it means death (1986: p.60).

The last June-related work of this period is *al-Makhād*<sup>44</sup> (*Labour*) written by Sa'ādah 'Awdah Abu 'Iraq. The work presents the restructuring of life in a Palestinian village, al-Ghalia, immediately after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967. The novel reveals the network of social relations within the village - which is in itself a symbol of Palestine - where the interests of different classes already in existence prior to the occupation played an important role in forming the new relation with the present conditions of occupation. The story begins a month after the occupation when the imam of

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<sup>44</sup> Sa'ādah 'Udeh Abu 'Irāq, *al-Makhād* (Amman: Rābiṭat al-Kuttāb al-Urduniyyīn, 1984). This work is included in the same period, in spite of its appearance in 1984, because the author completed writing his work in 1978, but did not have the means for its publication at that time.



the mosque hears cries within the house of Abu 'Alī, a retired officer in the Jordanian army whose previous oppressive practices none of the villagers can forget. The *mukhtar*<sup>45</sup>, Abu 'Āmir, establishes contact with a suspect character, Nawwaf al-Ḥamdān, the son of a usurer who, unlike his father, exploits his learning to establish relations with the people of the village in order to enhance his own interests through the companies he runs. His behaviour arouses suspicion because he behaves like a "Khawaja"<sup>46</sup> and has relations with an equally suspect woman, Huda Hadi. He is a typical exploiter of the people, a bourgeois who takes advantage of the situation to enhance his personal interests.

The crying referred to earlier proves to be caused by the murder of Abu 'Alī, the ex-officer, and the Mukhtar with the bourgeoisie ask the Israelis to investigate the murder. Shim'on, the Israeli investigator who speaks Arabic fluently, comes to the village and carries out the investigation. At this point the novel starts to deal with the occupation and its impact on the village in an uncontrived manner. When Shim'on interrogates 'Alī about the murder of his father, he gives in and informs Shim'on about a secret resistance cell which arouses admiration among the villagers. They are young, poor and careless

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<sup>45</sup> *Mukhtar* (pl. *Makhatir*) is the alderman who is chosen by a tribe or a group of people to represent them in official affairs and who can give certain certificates to support legal claims that require unavailable documents.

<sup>46</sup> The expression "Khawajah," is used in Arabic to refer to a person who is a foreigner and behaves differently from the Arabs. In this context, it is applied in a derogatory sense, implying an imitation of foreigners.

youngsters who have little experience. But as the villagers wonder in amazement:

What can such a group of young beetles do when large fleets and armies were defeated? (Abu 'Iraq, 1984: p.74).

As al-Karaki notes, the author of *al-Makhād* succeeds in this work in presenting an analysis of the past and a vision of the future through the regeneration of Aḥmad al-Ya 'qub and his sexual potency which occurs after meeting the widow, Mas 'ada. Nawwaf on the other hand begins to lose all his possessions for Huda Hadi whom he cannot understand or know whether she is a cultured woman, a spy or a procurer (1986: p.78).

The novel during this period (1968-1979) attempted to develop along other lines, mainly the social and sentimental. However, several comments should be made on the production of this period in these domains. The first general observation on the novel production which dealt with sentimental themes is that it remained a continuation of similar earlier writings, with little development, if any, in terms of themes and technique. Thus the significance of these works does not go beyond a documentary one for literary history purposes.

The second remark is that some Jordanian writers who had political affiliations wrote some significant works during this period, but their works were not published in Jordan and the Jordanian reader did not have easy access to them. Such were the works of the late Jordanian writer, Ghalib Halasa. However, I discuss Halasa's works in the following chapter, because they did

not seem to have any influence on the Jordanian literary production during the period under discussion.

A third point to be mentioned here is the instability of the country during the early seventies, due to the clashes that occurred between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian resistance movements that led to a period of repression. This caused a delay in the production of literary texts that might otherwise have appeared.

In 1972, Ḥusni Freiz published two long stories in one volume, *Ḥub min al-Fayḥā'* (*Love from al-Fayḥā'*) and *Zahr al-Zayzafūn*<sup>47</sup> (*The Sisyphus Flowers*), and both stories deal mainly with sentimental subjects. In *Ḥub min al-Faiḥā'*, Freiz presents a love story that occurred in the late thirties between a young Jordanian man who was studying at Damascus University, and an 18 year-old Damascene girl whom he came to know as a result of an unexpected event. In his introduction, Freiz says:

I have blended in these two stories some real events with imaginary ones, and gave myself the liberty to make out of this mixture a story. And when this took the form of a story, I found it possible to publish it, as I believe that there is no harm in doing so, contrary to other materials that may corrupt our minds and sentiments through reading them (Freiz, 1972: 5).

In these two stories, events are numerous and the characters are many. The stories are characterised by a directness of narrative, and they contain

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<sup>47</sup> Ḥusnī Frīz *Ḥub min al-Faiḥā'* (Amman: Maktabah al-Sharq wa maṭba'atuhā, 1972).

many descriptive passages. The author's language is dominant over his characters in a manner that makes of them mouthpieces for him, with an evident romanticism. In these two stories also there is a concentration on social and sentimental ideas with constant interference on the part of the author that makes the stories in one way or another less of a narrative and more of an informative type of discourse. For example, the chapter on pages 66-69 in the first story appears to be added to the story, and has nothing to do with the flow of events. Similarly, the author includes a complete chapter about the Palestinian tragedy and argues that the Arab nation did not learn the lessons of history. The protagonist's sudden national awareness that comes eleven years after his graduation from university seems unconvincing, especially as his qualification was of a rare educational level in his country and day.

Other works appeared in Jordan during this period that were mainly concerned with social and common issues, but these works were unable to free themselves from documentary narrative features, and they were characterised by the absence of the conscious social attitude. Besides, many of these works suffered from a poor standard of language that had a negative effect on artistic expression. Of these works is Sami Maḥrīz's *Liqa' al-Kharīf*<sup>48</sup> (*Meeting in Autumn*) which is narrowed down to a collection of characters and events, dominated by a preconceived idea centring on the inevitability of the return of one protagonist, Ṣādiq, and his ultimate union with Nihad. It recounts the

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<sup>48</sup> Sami Maḥrīz, *Liqa' al-Kharīf*, (Amman: Dār Philadelphia lil-Ṭibā'ah, 1974).

successful life of Zāfir, the main protagonist, a son of a woman servant who through his mother's perseverance and hard work, obtains a university degree in English. Coincidences and good luck play a major role in his success in work, marriage and achievements. As a result of his similarity to Nihad's lover, Šādiq, she offers him work and enjoys a popularity among all women who fall in love with him at first sight, including his employer, the girl of the family whom his mother serves, and a daughter of a wealthy family, Maysa'.

The work is close to being a thriller, written as it were, for a television series with the sole objective of demonstrating the inevitability of the union of the two lovers, namely, Nihad and Šādiq who had left the country in despair after Nihad's marriage, for the USA.

The works that dealt with local and social themes during this period were not successful because of the inadequacy of their artistic development, and their value remains a historical one. Of these works is Fu'ād al-Qusūs's novel, al- '*Awdah min al-Shamāl*<sup>49</sup> (*The Return from the North*) in which the author attempts to portray the social conditions that were prevalent in East Jordan at the beginning of the twentieth century towards the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the East Jordan Emirate. The novel tells the story of a village represented by 'Awwād's family, 'Assāf, Ibrahim and a Palestinian fugitive, Marzūq, who flees his city for fear of tribal feuds. Marzūq establishes friendly relations with the local community and is

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<sup>49</sup> Fu'ād al-Qusūs's novel, al- '*Awdah min al-Shamāl* (Amman: Wizārah al-Thaqāfah wal-Funūn, 1976).

integrated into it. The story takes its title from the journey which 'Awwād, the protagonist, undertakes to Damascus where he becomes aware of the national feelings and the ideas of Arab unity and the quest for freedom. The common ideas, beliefs and customs of rural East Jordan during the formative stages of the Emirate are brought to light in al-Qusūs's work, and in this sense, it could be considered as a sort of social documentary work that attempts to approach rural Jordanian society from an anthropological interest in primitive customs and moral values and norms.

While the Jordanian writers at home were still struggling with the writing of their first works that lacked maturity, one Jordanian novelist was actively embarking on the production of his novels that claim a seat among the novels of high artistic value. In the following chapter, some of Halasa's works that were produced during the 1970s will be discussed in detail.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GHALIB HALASA (1932-1989)

#### The Estranged, Frustrated Dreamer

In approaching literary texts, one should bear in mind the socio-historical contexts of their production, for a work of art reveals, among other things, the historical, social, and ideological factors that were dominant at the time of its making. The placement of literary texts in their proper context can help unmask the active forces that contribute to their creation and the ideologies concealed beneath their literary structures. Texts are, in the words of Edward Said, "a part of the social world, human life and, of course, the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (1991: p.4); or, as Terry Eagleton observes, "A text bears the impress of its historical mode of production as surely as any product secretes in its form and materials the fashion of its making" (1976: p.48).

From such a perspective, the literary works of Ghalib Halasa<sup>50</sup> present a world fundamentally characterised by estrangement, frustration, aborted hopes and aspirations; a world of nightmares and impotence where different forms of ideology stand in alliance, confrontation or opposition. The genealogy of this literary world is traceable in the author's own experiences that extend to cover his whole life, from childhood to adolescence, from youth to manhood. He was born in 1932 to a family that moved from al-Karak to Ma'in, a small village to the south of Amman. Halasa's family experienced a sense of estrangement, as it lived marginally within a community where the influence was shared by two other families (Abu Niḍāl, 1996: p.52). The wide gap in age between Ghalib the child and his parents heightened his sense of alienation.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, at school he was the youngest, poorest pupil amid older, wealthier ones; and the pupils with whom he studied were the sons of the city's elite. This sense of alienation spurred the young Ghalib to search for a sense of belonging to a family, a party and a nation. This craving found its expression in the novels and short stories which he wrote over a period of twenty years.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>The transliteration of Ghalib Halasa's name is "Ghālib Halasā,". However his name is not transliterated throughout because of the way he used it. See "Note on Transliteration," p.9.

<sup>51</sup> When Ghalib Halasa was born, his mother was in her fifties and his father was in his eighties.

<sup>52</sup> Ghalib Halasa wrote seven novels and two collections of short stories. They are *Wadī' wa al-Qiddīsah. Mīlādah* (*Wadī'* and *St. Miladah*) (A Collection of Short Stories) 1968; *al-Ḍaḥik* (*Laughter*) 1970; *al-Khamāsīn* (*The Khamsin*) 1975; *Zunūj Wa-Badū Wa-*



Thus it may be argued that the novels which Halasa wrote are in their totality the story of his bitter experiences, the chronicle of his frustrated desires and aborted dreams; the despondency which the thwarted, ambitious revolutionary ultimately finds himself in, after prolonged struggle and strife that cost him dearly. As Halasa himself expresses it, writing becomes “an exploration of the disappointment generated from the harsh comparison between the ideal and reality” (Quoted in Abu Niḍāl, 1996: 52).

The fifty-seven years of Ghalib Halasa’s life were an indefatigable effort not only in political and social terms, but also in intellectual pursuit. His early education at The Bishop School<sup>53</sup> enabled him to master the English language and gave him access to many literary works in both Arabic and English. Besides showing a talent for creative writing, Ghalib took an interest in literary criticism and translation.<sup>54</sup>

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*Fallāḥūn (Negroes, Bedouins and Peasants)* (A collection of short stories); *al-Su’āl (The Question)* 1979; *al-Buka’ ‘alā al-Aṭlāl (Lamenting the Ruins)* 1980; *Thalāthah Wujūh li-Baghdād (Three Faces of Baghdad)* 1984; *Sultānah* 1987 and *al-Riwā’iyyūn (The Novelists)*, 1988. However, Ghalib refers to the story “Negroes Bedouins and Peasants” as a novel, although it is included with other short stories; I tend to consider it a long story or a novella, since it does not exceed 51 pages. Some parts of this story were translated into English.

<sup>53</sup> One of the best private schools in Jordan during the thirties and until the early sixties of this century. It was run by the Church of England and promoted English language and culture.

<sup>54</sup> Ghalib Halasa also wrote literary critical essays which he published in many journals in Beirut, Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. He also translated Gaston Bachelard’s book, *the Poetics of Space*.

## I. The Novels:

Ghalib Halasa produced seven novels and two collections of short stories that can be roughly classified as "Cairene" and "Jordanian" works, with only one exception, namely his novel *Thalāthat Wujūh li-Baghdād* whose focus is the political life of Iraq. This division is based on the thematic structure of the works, although Jordan and Egypt figure concurrently in almost all of his works. Writing about his novels, Ghalib Halasa says:

The novels that take place in Cairo are those of self-revision, its gains and losses, our generation's gains and experiences, what it achieved or failed to achieve. As for the stories about Jordan, they are the stories of the heart<sup>55</sup>.

Halasa's novels are unconventional in both form and content. One cannot find a central plot that the whole novel is structured around, but rather an episodic structure, and apparently unrelated events that at first perplex the reader. However, the careful reader will discover that underneath this seemingly chaotic, episodic structure lies a deeply-connected, integrated organic entity. The perplexity which the reader at first experiences comes from

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<sup>55</sup> Khayri al-Dhahabi quotes Halasa's comment on his novels in his article, "Qirā'ah Naqdiyyah fī A'māl Ghalīb Halasa: Šūrat al-Fanān fī A'mālihi al-Ibdā'iyyah," in al-'Arabi, No. 380 (July 1990) p.107.

the complexity of the narrative which Ghalib Halasa introduces into his novels, and the subtlety of the connections between different events and different episodes that require an open, discerning eye to detect.

In this chapter, three of the seven novels which Ghalib wrote will be discussed, while some references will be made to other works.

(1) *Al-Ḍaḥik*<sup>56</sup> (*Laughter*)

*Al-Ḍaḥik* is by no means a conventional novel. There is no central character or plot around which events evolve. It is a collection of tableaux that form an overall picture of human life, stretching from ancient times to the present day. The gloomy image which the novel attempts to depict confronts the reader from the outset with citations from Arab history where the individual was severely and unjustifiably punished for displaying a talent. The novel begins with "documents" exposing two different historical eras simultaneously: the first reveals a testimony of Abu al-Faraj al-Asfahani<sup>57</sup> about the castration of a singer whose lovely voice had attracted the attention of the Caliph's maids (1981: pp.5-7). The second document is a confession from the modern age in which the confessant acknowledges a sort of

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<sup>56</sup> *al-Ḍaḥik (Laughter)* Beirut: Dār al-Maṣīr, 1981 (2nd edition). All subsequent references to this work are documented within the text. First published in 1970 by Dār al-'Awdah, Beirut.

<sup>57</sup> Abu al-Faraj al-Asfahani is Ali bin al-Hussein al-Umawi who lived in the tenth century A.D. He is the author of the well-known book, *al-Aghani*.

psychological distress which gives him a dread of enjoying listening to Um Kulthum's songs<sup>58</sup> (1981: p.11). The acceptance of the idea of guilt for enjoying performing or listening to a performance reveals the deeply-rooted terror which the human individual experiences as a result of oppression. After this brief introduction to the contaminated world which the novel attempts to explore, the reader is put face to face with a nightmarish experience in which the narrator finds himself the victim of a horrible terror inside a dark tunnel which culminates in a scene incredibly reminiscent of Kafka:

Then a car turned towards me from a side road. It stopped close to me and the right-hand door opened. .... I submissively got into the car and said, "Ṭūkh, ya Rayyis,"<sup>59</sup>

The passengers seemed not to hear me. "I must not blame them," I thought, "they are carrying out orders."

All of a sudden, I found myself standing before three interrogators, amongst whom was my friend who marched with me in the tunnel, and they were whispering something to each other. I raised my voice and declared thunderingly that I regard this trial illegal and deny its competence, and that I myself will write the defence. I woke up trembling, covered with cold sweat, while the sight of the three interrogators was still before my eyes (1981: pp.18-19).

This nightmare of suddenly finding oneself trialed for something unknown seems to be a terror for the human individual, especially under the

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<sup>58</sup> A famous Egyptian singer during the fifties, sixties and mid-seventies. Her songs are still current in The Arab World, in spite of the arrival of many new singers on the scene, and the different fashions that have appeared in Arabic music. She died in 1976.

<sup>59</sup> The expression, "Ya Rayyis" is used in Egyptian dialect to address a driver.

suppressive, totalitarian regimes, where deprivation of all human rights through a pseudo-legal system can incriminate and convict him for ordinary daily deeds. This oppression that affects the individual is given a universal dimension in the novel through the presentation of cases from different parts of the world. Jack Smith, an American citizen is brought to trial because he kissed his wife in the morning. In the trial, the judge was trying an individual whose name changed all the time, and yet it was Jack Smith who stood before the court as a defendant. Jack Smith protests at the trial by saying:

I would like to clarify some facts. In the first place, my name is Jack Smith, while this judge is trying a man whose name is at one time James Tender, at another Gregory Tender, and at a third Gregory Sender (1981: p.170).

The trial itself proves that no matter who the individual is, it is he or she who suffers from universal oppression. Names do not count, they make no difference.

This same idea of individual suffering, regardless of name, comes again in Ghalib Halasa's novel, *Thalāthat Wujūh Li-Baghdād*<sup>60</sup> in which a whole section is dedicated to the problem of mixing names. The protagonist, whose name is Ghalib, is sometimes addressed as 'Abbas and 'Abbūsi. Female characters also have their names mixed up, such as Layla and Sihām. The character of Layla has an additional complication in being mistaken for two other female characters who have the same name: Layla the Egyptian student

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<sup>60</sup> *Thalāthat Wujūh Li-Baghdād* (Three faces for Baghdad) Nicosia, Āfāq, 1984. All subsequent references to this work are documented within the text.

who appears in another work by Halasa, *al-Khāmsīn*, or Layla, the Iraqi woman who is a member of the Iraqi Communist Party. It is through this ambiguity in identifying the characters through the names and the confusion arising from this situation that Ghalib Halasa attempts to elucidate the universal victimisation of the human individual. The anonymous narrator and the protagonist of *al-Dahik* is himself a political activist, exiled from his city to a village where he is under house arrest, yet still witnesses the torture to which other citizens are exposed. As he leaves the officer's room in the police station, he captures one of the most appalling scenes of torture:

I saw Īssā's naked body stretched on a white, unsmooth large wooden table. His back and the side of his face were recognisable to me; his hands were stretched beside his body. A soldier was holding a very thin whip hitting 'Īssā's body with it slowly and accurately. The lash of the whip left behind it a red line along the back. Then the hand increased its pace of beating, swift lashes beginning from the top of the shoulder and ending at the rectum; and then turning back to the top of the shoulder again. Everything happened without a sound. At that moment I realised that the room had no windows, and that the light did not come from a lamp that was hanging from the ceiling, but from an unknown place. It seems that the light came from different sources as there was no shadow in the room. The door quickly closed, but I still heard the sound of the whip piercing the air in a monotonous sequence (1981: p.139).

The narrator later realises that this was a new device for castrating people like Īssā, the young activist who tried with other comrades to rewrite the history of the village. Thus his ambitions were defeated by the ruthless

oppressive force which turned him first into a castrated man, then into a lunatic (1981: pp.140-42).

Combined with this harsh destructive punishment for activists is the sense of estrangement within their own society, imposed by the ruthless power that transports them from one place to another. The narrator is not the only stranger in the little village of his exile. In fact, every individual whose lot cast him into it is a stranger there:

Time and again I indulge myself in that greedy daydream, that temptation to stand in the heart of this village, to dwell in its womb. Then all of a sudden, and in an incomprehensible manner, I find myself cast away outside it. I had to endure much before realising that everyone here is a stranger, they had come to terms with their alienation to the extent that made estrangement the only means of dealing with the others (1981: p.135).

Through this alienation, the disintegration of the social structure is achieved, a successful means for combating reform. Thus through terror, suppression and destruction, the optimism, ambition and aspiration of the individual are transformed into pessimism, apathy and despondency. It is a gradual metamorphosis which the narrator, as well as many other characters in the novel undergo:

We used to believe that the world was at our disposal, and history whose secrets we thought we had known, we believed that we could handle as a ring in our fingers (1981: p.23).

Or when the news of the Iraqi revolution of July 1958 is heard, the narrator enthusiastically remarks:

The possibilities began to multiply: the Iraqi revolution is the beginning for the liberation of the Gulf,<sup>61</sup> Oman and the protectorates. Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Algeria shall be completely liberated.<sup>62</sup> .... A united great homeland, rich and free ... It seemed to us that that dream began to materialise, obstacles in its way were mere cardboard that could be torn by the slightest touch ... We move towards that day without making much effort, without pain or difficulty. Then I saw that face which was dyed with the false colour of red, Susan's face, pressing against the window of the cafe (1981: pp.119-120).

The appearance of the prostitute's face at that moment is ideologically crucial: It reveals not only the adulterated dream, the transience of the illusion and the momentary self-deception under which the characters exist, but also the absence of a clear vision for the present, an absence which allows for a pseudo-visualisation of a utopian future that ignores the active forces of the present, forces that practically mould and transmute the future in a manner that it may give expression to their ideology. It is, therefore, not surprising that the image of the age abruptly imposes itself, brutally destroying the utopian dream, the wishful world of the society portrayed in the novel. It is not the ordeal of an individual, but that of a whole society. The employment of the collective pronoun alludes to a collective experience, an experience characterised by bitter disappointment and agony arising from an ideological failure, a failure to realise and comprehend the present and attain a clear vision of the potential future:

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<sup>61</sup> In 1958, all the Gulf states as well as south Yemen were British protectorates.



What was for us became our enemy, it convicted and disgraced us. .... Now that everything is over and the blue transparent shirt is removed like a dream, the face of our age appears in its reality, grim, full of wounds that ooze pus... This age that deceived and raped us, transformed us, after having sexual intercourse with us and castrating us, into whores and lunatics. Now ... was it our guilt? (1981: p.128).

Implicit in the final line of this quotation an accusation of the revolutionary forces of tacitly implicating themselves in the process of their own ideological defeat through their inability to recognise and identify their present circumstances and place them in their historical perspective. They have sufficed themselves in living the illusion, the dream instead of confronting the reality of their present situation and ultimately failed to envisage a practical vision of the future. For "to know the future," as Eagleton remarks, "can only mean to grasp the present under the sign of its internal contradictions, in the alienations of its desire, in its persistent inability ever quite to coincide with itself" (1990: p.26).

One of the recurrent motifs in almost all of Ghalib Halasa's novels is the image of this age as a destructive force, a force of futility, sterility and impotence. In *al-Su'āl*<sup>62</sup>, (The Question) the age is represented by the character of *al-Saffāḥ* (The Blood-Shedder) who finds his pleasure in murdering his victims after raping them and amputating their genitals. The moral written texts which the blood-shedder insists on leaving beside the

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<sup>62</sup> Algeria won its independence from France in 1962.

<sup>63</sup> *al-Su'āl* (The Question) by Ghalib Halasa Beirut, *Dār ibn Rushd*, 1979. All subsequent references are documented within the text.

bodies of his victims reveal an embedded contradiction within the suppressive authoritarian ideology which he represents; an ideology characterised by its hegemonic trend whose basic instrument of implementation is brutal force, while advocating at the same time a moral theology. In this sense, the actions of the Blood-shedder and his moralising texts confront the reader as a parody of, and a metacommentary on the authoritarian practices that in their quest for domination employ both brutal force and proselytising texts endeavouring not only to subjugate society to their authority, but at the same time seek a psychological assent to it. In his introduction to the second edition<sup>64</sup> Halasa finds in the Blood-Shedder

The essence of the suppressive authority, a specialist in torturing the living flower of the nation, political prisoners, and in attempting to destroy them both physically and psychologically<sup>65</sup> (1986: p.18).

The idea of social and political castration is further underscored in Halasa's last novel, *al-Riwā'īyyūn*<sup>66</sup> (*The Novelists*) which is a sequel to *al-Su'āl* and a second version of *al-Ḍaḥīk*. In this novel, Ihāb, the protagonist, is a

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<sup>64</sup>Beirut: Dār al-N56

adīm, 1986.

<sup>65</sup>In his introduction to this edition, Ghalib Halasa remarks that "The Blood-Shedder's pathology brought back to him primitive modes of behaviour and a human prototype. Thus he transformed the spiritual castration inflicted by the authority on the individuals into its original ancient form, the ritual of fathers castrating their sons" (p.18)

<sup>66</sup>*Al Riwā'īyyūn (The Novelists)* Beirut, Dār ibn Rushd, 1988. All subsequent references to this novel are documented within the text.

novelist and political activist who is released from prison just a few days before the 1967 War takes place and finds all his hopes and aspirations frustrated by the crushing defeat in the war. The tricks and lies of the past can no longer deceive him or any other character. This defeat leads Ihāb and Zaynab, his revolutionary partner, to degenerate into savages whose sole aims become erotic sex, drunkenness and addiction. Zaynab addresses Ihāb in an anguished tone:

You failed in controlling the movement of society, so did our efforts in trying to transform it. Ihāb, you failed to grasp the world and control it through your novel. Your failure in politics led to your failure in writing, so you attempt to control Zaynab's body and soul (1988: p.312).

The identification of Zaynab as the recent degenerative form of Nadia in *al-Ḍaḥīk* can be confirmed through the narrator's intentional confusion by making Ihāb address her as Nadia instead of Zaynab (1988: p.156), and later on when Ihāb remembers the good old days, as he believed them then to be, he addresses Zaynab saying:

Nadia, were we aware in the fifties, when we formulated our dreams that we should be turned into geldings and prostitutes in the second half of the sixties? (1988: p.346).

This tone of utter resignation which characterises Halasa's last novel has its early manifestations in *al-Ḍaḥīk*. Yet this sense of resignation cannot be considered as the dominant feature of his earlier works, though it remains embodied in the continual struggle between two conflicting forces that take different forms of binary oppositions, such as exalted sex and profane whoredom, sterility and fertility, forces of oppression and freedom. One of the

major manifestations of this binary opposition is the male-female relationship. On the one hand, there is the positive relationship between the main protagonist who is always a male character, and the refined, intellectual female character. On the other hand, the relationships between the protagonists and whores represent the opposite pole of the equation. However, both relationships are fruitless, a symbol perhaps of the sterility and futility of hopes and dreams in a world dominated by oppression and suppression. For example, the relationship between the protagonist and Nadia covers much space in *al-Dahik* and has all the necessary elements to form a successful love story. Nevertheless, this love relationship ends tragically, since no hopes or expectations of a happy, bright future can ever come out of this vast wasteland in which the forces of destruction have the upper hand. The struggle is futile, because, as the protagonist bluntly puts it:

We have constructed a big myth on false analysis, fanaticism and hubbub. Then in a few minutes we collapsed and it appeared to all that we are bankrupt, and yet you insist on carrying on with the lie (1981: p.311).

The revelation is brutally crushing. They no longer have faith in anything. Scepticism becomes a substitute for certainty, and absurdity replaces sense. The metamorphosis is profound and basic. Women revolutionaries turn into prostitutes (1981: pp.293-6) a situation analogous to what happens to Zaynab and her fellow women revolutionaries in *al-Riwā'īyyūn* (1988:pp.377-81).

This lack of certainty and the sense of loss waken in the protagonist "a nostalgia for that dense, silent certainty that was not interrupted by questioning

or wonder" (1981: p.290). If the female revolutionaries became prostitutes, the male revolutionaries relapsed into apathy, irony, loneliness and despair:

Their position is defined primarily from the insurmountable discrepancy between what they desire and what is realised. It is despair, courageous apathy (1981: p.305).

Under the pressure of terror and oppression, the revolutionaries take refuge in self-deception and give in to terror and accommodate it. By doing so, they allow "the most reactionary ideas to find their way to the people and to control them" (1981: p.252).

The world portrayed in *al-Dahik* is that of frustrated dreams, aborted ambitions, defeated goals, vanquished souls; a world of anxiety, fear and resignation. Neither the identity of the individuals nor the place makes any difference. The three books which comprise the novel provide different places, characters and events. Yet one cannot free oneself anywhere in the novel from the sense of anxiety, dread, deception, uncertainty and despair that permeates the whole work. This same world confronts the reader in *al-Khamāsīn* which will be the focus of the following pages.

## (2) *Al-Khamāsīn*<sup>67</sup> (*The Khamsin*)

*Al-Khamāsīn* in one sense is a sequel to *al-Daḥīk* although there is little in common between the characters of both novels in temperament, idiosyncrasy and inclinations. However, the affinity between these two novels is evident in the atmosphere of uncertainty, repression, impotence and sterility that dominate the two works. The period covered in this work is the sixties and early seventies of this century, and is given a symbolic representation through the choice of a time within the seasonal cycle that lacks decisiveness and stability. It is the period of *al-Khamāsīn* which comes between the cold, wet winter and the hot, dry summer. In this sense, one can argue that *al-Khamāsīn* stands for uncertainty and indecisiveness that come after the harsh, cruel defeat and the expected and desired victory. Nevertheless, the concentration of the novel on the interim stage without moving to the next, deprives the work of any optimistic expectation of a possible victory. The title and the novel express a stressful, painful and suffocating climate making suffering, frustration, impotence and sterility the focus of this novel.

In this work, Ghalib, the protagonist and the narrator, feels stagnation and impotence both intellectually in his inability to complete the novel which he writes, and physically in his inability to establish a real, fruitful loving relationship. The political scene is no less stressful as it is so tense that it

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<sup>67</sup>[Beirut: Dār ibn Khaldūn, 1980 (2nd edition). All subsequent references to this work are documented within the text. First published in Cairo in 1975 by Dār al-Thaqāfah al-Jadīdah, but since that edition was exposed to harsh censorship and many pages of the original manuscript were left out, the author decided to republish it in Beirut.

annuls any intellectual discussion. Thus the *Khamsin* acquires a psychological dimension through penetrating into the psyche of the individual and becoming part of his daily suffering:

I cherished the *Khamsin* weather within me, the sense of exhaustion and degradation that are experienced by whoever lives in this weather. I experience it in the stagnant air when the heat of noon descends on the street, and the thick- exhausted car fuel shades us with the smell of burnt gasoline. Though invisible, I can see its white, transparent shadow reflect on the ground that is boiling like hell. I feel it intoxicating, choking, filling my lungs and stinging my eyes. I experience it in the sweat that soaks my pyjamas when I wake up, and in the attempt to carry on with a dialogue with intellectuals through the tension that one can hardly complete a sentence without being interrupted by someone else. I feel it in the lozenges which I use to rid myself of the throat congestion that descends heavily to my stomach, boiling like acid. I feel it in the anti-acid tablets that envelop my throat and give me the sense of swallowing a tonne of dust after which cigarettes hurt my throat and become tasteless as though smoking soil ... I live the *Khamsin* weather in Moshe Dayan's<sup>68</sup> provocative declarations, after which I drift into bloody daydreaming, from which I emerge calling upon myself to be reasonable (1978: pp.228-9).

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<sup>68</sup> General Moshe Dayan (1915-1981) was the Minister of Defence in the Israeli government during the 1967 June war between the Arabs and Israel. He also filled the same post in 1973 during the 1973 October war. The association that brings him to the protagonist's mind is the mentioning of eyes, since Moshe Dayan was partially blind and wore an eye-patch.

Like all Ghalib Halasa's novels, *al-Khamāsīn* is full of female characters who represent different aspects of human life. The missing aspect in this novel is, however, the real, revolutionary, intellectual woman which Nadia represents in *al-Daḥik*, and the strong, determined, beautiful woman which Maryam, 'Īssā's sister, represents where she fought a ferocious, unrelenting battle against the police officer in her quest for finding means for the treatment of her brother from his madness which resulted from the torture inflicted upon him in the police station, culminating in his castration (1981: p.158). This absence unveils the lack of determinacy in a climate of unrest and anxiety. Layla's character in *al-Khamāsīn* is the opposite type to Nadia and Maryam. She is an immature, rash, university student who wants easy access to knowledge, without bothering to read, and desires to become a wealthy, famous star without any effort on her part:

Layla suddenly said, and her face became distorted with anger and hatred: "I want you to make me understand what Communism is, Existentialism and Surrealism". ... "You want all this now?" I said. Words flooded quickly out of her mouth: "There's no time, I don't want to go on reading without understanding anything; and when can I read? When can I go to the institute? When can I sleep, eat, live, love, travel and see the world? When? ... When?" (1978: p.23).

The impotence created by the Khamasin climate is expressed through the protagonist's inability to act or take initiatives. In sexual terms, he is unable to establish a complete sexual relationship with women, apart from one isolated experience which came as a passive submission to the will of a woman:



He felt as he responded to her that he no longer had any control, as though he was performing a task only desired by that woman, as a tool in her hand which she uses savagely, only to throw it away later on as a disposable, useless thing; and he contented himself to be so (1978: p.146).

This sexual passiveness parallels the political and intellectual inertia, a signal of death. In this sense, female characters function in this novel, as has been noted by Ibrāhīm al-Sa'āfin, "to give expression to the idea of sterility and failure" in almost every scope of life in the world of the novel (1995: p.144).

In *al-Khamāsīn*, there is a permeating sense of suspense, a sense of waiting, expecting something mischievous to happen. The protagonist returns home, after a tiresome day at work, only to find a note from the Major requesting Ghalib's presence at the Ministry of the Interior. There he finds a large number of people waiting, an additional stress to the already stressful weather. In that waiting lobby,

Ghalib is absorbed in the place, enters the context of a world characterised by long waiting and the expectation of a sudden, violent evil deed (1978: p.51).

His previous experiences there make him understand that "they were more interested in convicting him than in obtaining information" (1978: p.54). His memories of scenes of torture, which he himself witnessed heighten his expectation of violence (1978: p.64). Nothing comes out of his expectations. The Major shows a warm intimacy towards him that increases his annoyance (1978: pp.70-1). The state of suffocation, stagnation and endless waiting confronts us all through the novel. It is there in the world of politics, writing,

action and, of course, in the weather itself. It is the novel of endless waiting, endless suffering, endless frustration and permanent defeat. There is a deafening silence everywhere:

The gloomy silence that suddenly overwhelmed Layla, on the University Bridge, silence in the Public Detective Building, silence in the atelier, silence in Rian Street, and this nightmare, the silence (1978: p.140).

The novel reveals a major factor that causes this social and political stagnation in its world, and that is, the deep-rooted hatred which politicians harbour for culture and intellectuals. To avoid direct allusion to politicians, the author employs the character of Basiūnī who works as a porter in the building where the German Democratic Republic has its news agency, the place in which the protagonist works as an interpreter, to shed light on more important aspects of the political scene. Basiūnī is a drug addict, and he manipulates his influence over women servants in the building to gather information about their masters. He also works as a secret police informer for the Ministry of the Interior by writing reports about the activities of the German News Agency. He is, in this sense, a true image of Third World politicians whose recklessness and self-interest drive the people to a state of apathy, inertia, despondency and, ultimately, death:

Like many prominent leaders of the Third World, Basiūnī cherished a profound disrespect for culture (1978: p.174).

And like these leaders,

Power was his quest. All his deeds were motivated by his insatiable craving to have control over others. When he had sexual intercourse with some women servants in the building

where the Agency is, many of whom obtained their jobs through him, sex was not a goal in itself and gave him no pleasure. His aim was to have power over the women and to get information from them about their masters. Thus he had strong relations with the tenants, and his domination over the servants was almost absolute (1978: p.184).

It is this will-to-power that joins villains, such as Basiūnī, with some Third World decision makers. Nevertheless, Basiūnī's downfall prognosticates the fate of those who share his approach. Similarly, Layla craves for power, identifies herself with the Khamsin weather which seemed to her "as an electric field that surrounds her, as a unique and skilful force in her static forearms and in her fingers" (1978: pp.33-34). However, like Basiūnī, there awaited her at the end of that path to fame and glory "a fall into the abyss of the void" (1978: p.42). Layla experiences a sense of defeat in her plans that were groundless and misplaced:

Her sense of defeat and shame inflated, damping her body.  
Then came that resounding explosion, a flowing torrent of  
indignation (1978: p.227).

The novel ends where it began, in the climate of suffocation, inertia, impotence and inability to act. Ghalib the protagonist, the narrator, the novelist and the implied author is still attempting to write a novel inspired by a dignified woman to whom he is unable to speak, and in whose absence he can never complete his work:

During this, I think of the novel which I started writing during the Khamsin about that weather. Its heart is that dignified woman, and Layla is only one small detail of it. I think about my novel, because I think of that woman. I remember that at a certain point in the novel I stopped, unable to add a single word

to it. Several weeks followed during which I experienced the feeling of death, the death of my creative power. I said to myself, if I only return to that woman, if I only hear her voice or speak to her, my impotence will be dispelled. The novel remains in its fluid form before me, persisting, clamouring for its completion, and the vicious circle starts again (1978: p.228).

This sense of futility remains to the end, and the bitterness of this paralysis of will bursts through the last lines of the novel:

It was because of my inability to perceive what was required of me to do, and because of my reluctance .... to respond to that agonised entreatment that she concluded I was unworthy of her trust (1978: pp.270-1).

(3) *Al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl*<sup>69</sup> (*Lamenting the Ruins*)

*Al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* (*Lamenting the Ruins*) is the novel of recollection in which the scenes of the early childhood in Jordan of the author combine with those of his youth and manhood in Egypt. By manipulating time as a major factor in the structure of the novel, Ghalib Halasa succeeds in bringing together these two different places into one view. Thus one could argue that the major character in this novel is time that shapes, transforms and ultimately destroys the hopes, ambitions, fears and beauty of the characters in the world of the novel. It is both the force of creation and destruction; it nurtures, ripens and eventually destroys beauty. Khālid, the protagonist, wakes up at night after reading in al-Aghani about 'Ā'ishah bint Ṭalhā, and immediately remembers that:

'Ā'ishah no longer exists, that exquisite body which was full of love, desire and vitality turned into dust and fragile, worm-eaten bones, I felt the pace of death creeping incessantly through my body, mix with every drop of sweat. I felt I was walking towards it with eyes wide open, unable to stop or retreat. I wanted to cry and plead for my sake and for others: stop the factor of time that assaults us, destroying everything. Resist this germ that decomposes us from within (1980: p.25).

The world of the novel alternates between Jordan and Egypt, with images from remote history to the world of the late 19th-century. Current

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<sup>69</sup> *Al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* (*Lamenting the Ruins*) (Beirut, Dār ibn Khaldūn, 1980).

All subsequent references to this work are documented within the text.

affairs are viewed through the retrospective past, so that the impact of time may stand as a guiding principle.

The novel begins with some verses from a pre-Islamic ode by Imru' al-Qays<sup>70</sup> in which the poet laments the ruins of his beloved's place of residence in recollecting the memories of the beloved.

After this prelude, we are introduced to the memory of a visit to a family whose young daughter, Kawthar, danced to the rhythm of beating on the table. The beating revived the memories of the protagonist's childhood in his small village where they used to beat the coffee seeds in the Mihbaj<sup>71</sup> "and the well of memory was uncovered", a beginning that brings to mind Proust's work, *Ala Rechercher du Temps Perdu*.

The protagonist, Khālid, wakes up one wet, cold morning, only to realise that that day is a holiday. Because of the rain and bad weather, he is confined to his apartment. This confinement, combined with Khālid's loneliness, offer plenty of space for recollection and daydreaming. He recalls during this boring, monotonous day all his previous relationships with women. Khālid projects them in a lively and vivid manner on the screen of his mind. In one of his critical essays, Ghalib Halasa remarks:

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<sup>70</sup>Imru' al-Qays was one of the most famous pre-Islamic Arab poets who composed one of those long odes and known as the *Mu'allaqāt* (*The Golden Odes*) which are supposed to have taken their Arabic name from the fact that they were hung on the walls of the Ka'ba in Mecca, as an acknowledgment of their greatness.

The misery of the moment, the present and the loneliness drive the protagonist to recall all his relationships in the past with women.<sup>72</sup>

The premise on which this novel is probably based is the assumption that the past, with all its hopes, longings, expectations, anguish and suffering is much better than the frustrations of the present that lead nowhere. It is a nostalgic journey, an escape from the harsh present to the past, in spite of all the disappointments and bitterness which he experienced. With the gloomy portrait of the future, Khālīd relapses into a pastoral nostalgia that projects his childhood memories in the village where pure love, decency, honesty and simplicity were the characteristic features of life. These qualities contrast sharply with the violent, noisy, rotten and abated desires of metropolitan Cairene life. As Ibrāhīm al-Sa'āfīn observes:

In this novel, streaks of romanticism combine with the view of critical realism that analyses reality and points to the contradictions, condemning its banality (1995: p.161).

As in all Halasa's other novels, sex performs a significant functional role in *al-Bukā' ala al-Aḥlāl* and the nature of the sexual relationship determines social and political concepts. The two main forms of sexual relationships that appear concurrently in the novel - and stand in binary opposition - are the elevated, exalted relationship and the erotic grotesque one. They may be an expression of the eternal struggle between right and wrong,

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<sup>71</sup>A deep, hollow cylindrical metal bowl in which coffee seeds are ground by beating. Used mainly by the Bedouins in many parts of the Arab world.

<sup>72</sup>Ghalib Halasa, "'Awd 'ala Bad'," in *al-Hurriyyah*, No. 961 (June 1983) p.17.

good and evil, life and death, or even between oppressors and oppressed. These two conflicting binary oppositions are in constant confrontation throughout history. In the world of the novel, the masses confront the police forces (1980: p.53), memories of 'Azzā, as an intellectual lover, stand in confrontation with the memories of Fāṭima, the prostitute (1980: p.141), and the memories of Nadia confront memories of Raḥma, the prostitute who stayed for some weeks in Khālīd's apartment (1980: pp.55-60).

Halasa employs historical events to confirm this view of continuous confrontation between these forces. In this way he uses the story of Abu al-Wāzī', <sup>73</sup> the religious thinker who resorted to the sword in order to rectify the wrongs committed by the Caliph and his followers:

Thus prayed Abu al-Wāzī': Oh God, make me clear. His prayer was not meant for the '*Ulama* who delighted in the minutiae of jurisprudence and the complexities of monotheism, but for the people whose cup overflowed and found no alternative to violence to solve the crises of their miserable existence. In violence, lines become clear-cut with no ambiguity (1980: p.35).

Images of suffering inflicted on victims of different races, sexes and ages combine in Khālīd's mind to complement his present suffering, his loneliness, isolation and despair. Through her silent endurance of the pain inflicted upon her by her mother, Kawthar, the little girl, acquires an ascetic

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<sup>73</sup> Ghalib Halasa also takes a longish quotation from *al-Aghani* by Abu al-Faraj al-Asfahani about Abu al-Wāzī' which describes how he went to a person whose job was to sharpen swords. After sharpening his sword, Abu al-Wāzī' killed the man and went into the streets killing every person who did not resist the Caliph.



theological dimension which endows her with Messianic qualities.

Nevertheless, these divine qualities are tainted by an implicit accusation of accomplices in the admission of her guilt and incrimination:

It is like an angel's face in Raphael's painting, a face that resembles Christ's face in an Italian painting by an artist whose name he forgot, his eyes full of pain, and the wreath of thorn upon his head, while he addresses His Father who is in Heaven from upon the cross crying "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" which means my God, my God, why have you forsaken me". It is Ingrid Bergman's face in the robes of a nun, kneeling before the cross, raising her eyes pleading to the owner of the pain-contracted face, caused by the nails driven into His hands and feet (1980: p.14).

The invocation of Ingrid Bergman's face dressed in a nun's robes conjures up images of suspicion and mistrust of her apparent innocence; beneath this false mask of purity mutations of guilt and complicity lurk implicating her in the process of her victimisation. In this sense, Kawthar becomes a symbol of victimised people who in the silent acceptance of their victimisation participate in creating their own oppression. In other words, through their passiveness towards their own suffering, they become in the final instance advocates of an oppressive ideology which they adopt as a substitute for their original one:

She rose above pain and disgrace. She did not cry or complain... The father with his grim, stern face, in a pious look, and a mouth that resembles a grand-mother's one, sat down as an Inquisitor witnessing the torture of a person who deviated from the Lord's path, while the child remained silent, disgraced, abandoned. She had confessed her deadly guilt, adopted her victimiser's point of view and accepted the verdict.

She stood in the light at the end of the way waiting (1980: pp.120-21).

The theological metaphors enclosed within such texts reveal an unconscious identification with the dominant ideology to the degree of metaphysical veneration and submission. This breeds a tendency towards escapism and resignation. The protagonist escapes into daydreaming and restructuring of old memories to offset for the frustrations of the present. This escapism, however, does not prevent reality from surfacing every now and then, confronting the protagonist with the reality of the situation; a situation characterised by stasis, paralysis and inertia. His endless waiting for something to happen, someone to ring the bell brings to the reader's mind Kafka's work, particularly *The Trial*. Unlike Joseph K. in Kafka's novel who wakes up one morning to find out that the bell has been rung for the initiation of his trial, Khālīd wakes up waiting for someone to ring the bell, to call on him:

Why doesn't the bell ring? Why doesn't anyone ascend or descend the stairs? Where have all the people gone to? Where are the friends, the neighbours, the intellectuals, the prostitutes, the pimps, the novelists, short story writers, critics, actors and actresses, directors and directresses, male and female radio announcers, .... the women servants who complain of their husbands' oppression, neighbours' aggression, who praise the tourists and speak ill of landlords and porters? Where are the communists, Nasserites,<sup>74</sup> Ba'thists,<sup>75</sup> the Muslim

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<sup>74</sup> Nasserites are those who adhere to the ideas which Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, the Egyptian president (1954-1970) advocated about Arab unity.

Brothers,<sup>76</sup> the Arab Nationalists,<sup>77</sup> the members of Islamic Hizb al-Tahrir,<sup>78</sup> the supporters of the Muhammadan Sunnah, Hizbullah, the Syrian Nationalists,<sup>79</sup> Existentialists, Surrealists, Trotskyists, Maoists, supporters of the public sector or those of the private sector? How, why and when did all these abandon him, go and leave him behind? (1980: p.106).

Absence of action, of confrontation in all its forms, apart from the continuous oppression, and the dominance of waiting over the scene present symptoms of a diseased state that leads to death. History becomes in this sense a steady progressive motion towards this ultimate goal. Thus missed opportunities evolve into forms of daydreaming where these opportunities are projected and restructured as though they were actualised. The protagonist recollects an incident during his childhood when a Bedouin shepherdess held him tight in her arms and kissed him, restructures this memory and turns it in

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<sup>75</sup> Ba'athists are those who believe in the ideas of the Ba'th Socialist Party which ruled in Syria after 1964 and in Iraq after the coup against President 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim (1958-1963).

<sup>76</sup> The Muslim Brothers is a religious movement which was established in the twenties of this century in Egypt and was banned in the mid-fifties by 'Abd al-Nasser. Branches of this movement have spread all over the Arab world.

<sup>77</sup> The Arab Nationalist followers of the ideas of some Arab thinkers, such as Walid Qamhawi and George ḥabash, who used to call for Arab unity as a solution for the problems that the Arab world faces.

<sup>78</sup> *Hizbu al-Tahrir al-Islami* (The Islamic Liberation Party) is one of the more extreme Islamic movements which calls for establishing a new Islamic Caliphate by means of force. It operates underground in all Arab countries, since there is a ban on its activities.

<sup>79</sup> The Syrian National Party is one that believes in the unity of Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria as one nation.

his daydreaming into an erotic experience (1980: pp.45-6, 123). This situation becomes a parallelism to the situation in which the whole nation dwells on its past to the total exclusion of the present. This is established through the invocation of Jamaluddīn al-Afghani, the well-known Muslim reformer and thinker.

However, the image in which Jamaluddīn is portrayed offers a chance for laughter, rather than fascination, - an implicit way of condemning the invocation of the past in the present:

The old man, of course, remembers Si Jamaluddīn al-Afghani. Of course, he remembers him. He used to drink a whole bottle of whisky, eat fifty grilled birds and then take his dinner. Before leaving, Jamaluddīn used to give the old man twenty-five piastres, a quarter of a Guinea, at a time when you could buy ten eggs for a halfpenny. .... Then he used to open his hand and speak: How long will you remain asleep, oh Egyptians! Rise up from your heavy, grievous slumber which has lasted for scores of centuries (or something of that sort). Sa'd Zaghlūl<sup>80</sup> used to listen and listen, trying hard not to miss a single word. Jamaluddīn used to extend the snuff-box to Sa'd Zaghlūl and say, "Rise up" (1980: p.140).

The last part of *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* is 'Azzā's recollection of her relationship with Khālīd and the narration of events from her own perspective. Unlike the bulk of the whole novel, this part is characterised by an optimism

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<sup>80</sup>One of the leading figures of the early twentieth century who established al-Wafd Party and led a revolution against the British presence in Egypt in 1919.

that remains unjustified. 'Azzā's ability to overcome her despair and move beyond it seems to be contrived and unconvincing. Khālīd remarks:

You have survived, because you have begun to transcend yourself (1980: p.200).

The novel ends on a cautiously optimistic note, though the dread of the future remains. 'Azzā comments on her brother 'Adil and his fiancée 'Awāṭif by saying:

I felt at that moment like a witness to Man's glory, in its most splendid form that none can rise above. That summit which divides the peak of ascendance, just before the end of the slope. Nothing can come after it, but the consecutive descent: marriage, boredom and the routine of life. This is why their beauty is tragic. What a surprising revelation appeared before me at that time! What joy and sorrow, choking with the sense of tragedy, I said: From this majesty tragedy begins, and a muffled cry within me, "Be aware" (1980: p.209).

*Al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* is in many senses a typical novel of Halasa's production in both form and content. It is the novel of defeat, of resignation, of past memories, of present inertia and stagnation and future loss. Ibrāhīm al-Sa'āfīn observes that in this novel,

The rhythm of defeat and despair goes on with the rhythm of time, and consequently with the rhythm of relapsing to the past. The author's basic relationships become something of the past, a memory. His village with all the images of life in it, his political and social relations, his connections with intellectuals of different ideologies and ways of thinking, and his relationships with women (prostitutes, such as Raḥma, Fāṭima and Zaynat, and the intellectual women such as, 'Azzā and

Nadia) become part of the past which he yearns to regain  
(1995: pp.169-70).

## II. Sex in Halasa's Novels:

An important feature of Halasa's novels, which cannot be overlooked in any study, is the different roles sex plays. Various forms of sexual relationships occur in his novels, and each of these has a specific function in expressing concepts and ideas that are essential to the thematic structure of the work. Although it is easy to find in Arabic literature passages about sex—particularly in the pre-Islamic poetry, the love poets of the Umayyad period and the Abbasid poets—<sup>81</sup> sex has been treated less explicitly in the texts that appear in the twentieth century, particularly in the novel. The early novelists of the forties and fifties of this century, represented sexual scenes by hints without employing elaborate description of such scenes. This reserved approach to sex seems not to have suited the new themes and purposes of some modern writers during the eighties. In writing about society, they found in sex an expression of some political and social phenomena where the homology of oppression and exploitation provide a paradigm into which politics, society and sex can be interchangeably employed to serve their

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<sup>81</sup>See for example, Hilary Kilpatrick's introduction to *Love and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature* edited by Roger Allen, Hilary Kilpatrick and Ed de Moor (London: al-Saqi Books, 1995), pp.9-10.

ideological ends.<sup>82</sup> Like his Egyptian contemporaries, particularly Ṣun‘allah Ibrāhīm, Jamal al-Ghīṭānī and Yūsuf al-Qa‘īd, Halasa strove to express, through the different explicit forms of sex, political and social realities which he viewed no less appalling and obscene than their pornographic equivalents. As Stephan Guth notes in his article on the employment of sex in the Egyptian novel during the eighties:

The writers try to provoke a readers' rebellion against an atmosphere which they themselves find cruel, ugly, disgusting and therefore unbearable, an atmosphere which they think will be perpetuated unless the facts are named and discussed openly<sup>83</sup>

The first form of sex that one confronts is the celebrated, exalted sexual relationship that occurs between lovers who are both intellectually and emotionally harmonious. Such is the relationship that arises between the protagonist of *al-Ḍaḥik* and Nadia, the symbol of motherhood, the homeland and the true lover. One can view in a similar light the relationship between Ghalib, the protagonist of *al-Khamāsīn*, and the anonymous, great woman who combines in her character

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<sup>82</sup>As Hilary Kilpatrick rightly notes, "Much more than in most West European literatures, discussions of love and sexuality in modern Arabic literature are intricately connected with ideas about society and the individual's place in it. They are central to contemporary Arabic culture." *ibid*, p.15.

<sup>83</sup>Stephan Guth, "The Function of Sexual Passages in Some Egyptian Novels of the 1980s," *ibid*, pp.129-30.

the total woman: the mother, the sister, the wife, the mistress, the whore, the friend, the liberal and the slave to some ideas that she will never renounce (1978: p.90).

The relationship that develops in *al-Su'āl* between Mustafa, the protagonist, and Tafīdah, in *Thalāthat Wujūh li-Baghdād*, Ghalib and Layla, Khālid and 'Azzā in *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* and Ihāb and Zaynab in *al-Riwā'īyyūn* all present this type of exalted love. Nevertheless, the promises which this exalted sexual relationship suggests do not reach fulfilment, but rather end up in frustration and futility, a symbol, perhaps, of the frustrated dreams of the intellectuals under the pressure of the counter productive oppression.

The second type of sexual relationship which always appears side by side with the former one is the profane, erotic relationship between the protagonists of the novels and the prostitutes. The occurrence of this type side by side with the former one reveals the polluted atmosphere surrounding the protagonists and the negative impact it has on them. This is perhaps referred to clearly in *al-Ḍahik* when the protagonist wakes up at night and says:

I smelt the sheet which covered my face. The smell of powder mixed with the smell of sweat reminded me of the prostitute. ....  
When I switched on the light, I saw my guilt embodied in the disorder that filled the room and the black stains on the sheet which the prostitute's feet left (1981: p.33).

This type of sexual relationship expresses social corruption emanating from political oppression. The connection between these two types of sexual relationship has its obvious political implication, since women in Halasa's novels represent the two contradictory attitudes of love and prostitution, an



equivalent of patriotism and treason. The uncertainty which envelops the reality makes the characters unable to distinguish between right and wrong, or at least makes them indifferent towards either. The main character in *al-Khamāsīn* is unable to decide which woman he ought to choose, and when making a choice, he is unable to take the right action:

That was a unique moment. Besides, it was an experience of frustration where the world becomes unrealised potentialities, a postponed promise of ecstasy. All its possibilities stir up the excitement of the violent desire of all that it offers, but it offers nothing apart from being a subject for writing .... Hereupon my sense of falseness is generated (1978: p.235).

A third type of sexual relationship which appears in Halasa's novels is the incestuous relationship, mainly between sons and mothers. Although this kind of relationship only appears in dreams or inner thoughts, it is meant to confirm a Freudian concept which Ghalib Halasa seems to adopt. It is evident in 'Īssā's dream in *al-Ḍaḥīk*, which he narrates to the protagonist about having sexual intercourse with his mother. Just as he stops narrating and starts panting, the electric current returns, and, in the light of the room, the protagonist sees Īssā masturbating (1981: pp.137-9). Similarly, Nadia thinks of the protagonist as

a child whom I bore in my womb, suckled him, and now he grows to have sexual intercourse with me (1981: p.105).

A similar incestuous desire appears in *Sultānah*<sup>84</sup> where Jiryis, the main male character and the narrator of many parts of the novel, falls in love with the woman whom he considered as his mother:

I was born and found out that I have two mothers: one of them I used to call "Mum" and the second I called "Mum Āminah". .... When I grew up, I was overcome by Āminah's myth, and she began gradually to depart from the mother's role to the role of a woman. At that point, I started looking at her in a new way, as a desired woman, a worshipped, adored woman which characterises the stage of adolescence (1987: pp.99-105).

This type of incestuous sex acts as a prelude to the idea of castration which, according to Freud, presents the ancient paternalistic response to sons' desires of their mothers. This concept which Ghalib Halasa adopts in his novels gains its significance through the political equation where the rulers practise a psychological castration of their subjects to prevent any change in their positions. This is what happened to 'Issā in *al-Ḍaḥik* and to the victims of the Blood-Shedder in *al-Su'āl*. It is the age of castration, impotence and rape.

As the protagonist in *al-Ḍaḥik* remarks:

This age that deceived and raped us, and after it had sexual intercourse with us, it castrated us, transforming us into whores and lunatics (1981: p.128).

A further form of sexual relationship which Halasa employs in his novels is the perverted sexual relationship. It has a twofold role to perform: firstly, it reveals the psychological degeneration of the individual, through the

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<sup>84</sup> *Sultānah* Beirut, Dār ibn Rushd, 1987 All subsequent references to this work are documented within the text.

impact of prison and rape, from the positive practicality to the negative passivity. The once sturdy opponents of an oppressive regime passively accept its domination and power, and through this submission to its will, they become followers and supporters. This is the case of the Muslim Brothers and the Communists after spending a period of time in prison. They become fascinated with Nasser's regime and consent to its will in *al-Riwā'īyyūn*. Secondly, because of the circumstances in prison where natural sexual relationships become impossible, the weak and young are victimised by those stronger and older. We come across such instances in *al-Khamāsīn* when 'Aṣḡūr, a convicted murderer who learns that his execution is near, takes a prisoner from room 27 - assigned for those who are under 16 years old - and rapes him:

The boy was shouting, but in the presence of the last wishes for a man who will soon die, they all kept silent (1978: pp.68-9).

In *Thalāthah Wujūh li-Baghdād*, we find a similar situation where one of the old prisoners in al-Tarḡīlāt Prison in Cairo has sexual intercourse with a boy who works as a secret informer for the prison service (1984: pp.104-5). The double exploitation of boys by both prisoners and prison service personnel portends the degeneration of future society, as the victimised accept their lot and come to terms with it. The most horrible type of sexual perversion appears in *al-Riwā'īyyūn* where the victimised prisoners not only accept their situation in prison, but also carry on with it after their release and in the absence of the conditions that compelled them to consent. Ṣāleḡ, a boy who was victimised by another older prisoner, notices Ḥasan, one of the fervent revolutionaries and a member of the Communist Party in prison and succeeds in seducing him, to

have sex with him in a manner that is in no way different from that of a prostitute (1988: p.171).

Halasa's obsession with writing about sex is a natural revolt against the common taboo which other Arab writers impose willingly on their own works. It is a new expression, perhaps, of his political and social revolt against the accepted moral and social norms. In an interview he gave to a Moroccan Ph.D. researcher, Ghalib observes:

As for sex, namely, its practice, it is one of the richest human experiences and, as is the case with other human experiences, it is varied. It can be an injury to both sides, .... or it can be practised in the human totality by which I mean mutuality, love, respect and kindness, but it can be abused.<sup>85</sup>

It could be argued that since in many Arab countries sex is used by the authorities as a means of humiliating individuals and extracting confessions from them, Halasa found it more convenient to expose these degrading techniques through his novels and reveal the profound traumatic impact they can have on society as a whole. This becomes clear in *Thalāthah Wujūh li-Baghdād* where Layla the Communist Iraqi girl who expects to be imprisoned, exercises herself by pushing a bottle of Pepsi Cola into her vagina, so that when she is exposed to forced sex, the terror of it may vanish:

Layla's imagination was haunted by that bottle, making her believe she is unfit for love or marriage (1984: p.161).

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<sup>85</sup> *al-Su'āl* A Novel by Ghalib Halasa. 2nd edition, Answers to Miss Mina Barqani, a Moroccan Ph.D. researcher at The Sorbonne University, p.T.

Zaynab in *al-Riwā'īyyūn*, dreams of a perverted sexual relationship between her lover and fellow revolutionary, Ihāb, and Turki, a rich Arab from the Gulf to whom she sells her body:

She sees them exchanging glances of complicity, they overlook her, ignore her in a profound mutual understanding of which she is excluded.. She feels jealous and attempts to regain both of them. .... They disappear. .... She rises to look for them .... She saw the two naked bodies, Turki embracing Ihāb from behind, while Ihāb's face convulsed in a silent pain. His body moved with the movement of the body that was behind it (1988: p.222).

Zaynab's dream may symbolise the sense of injustice which she knows she has incurred as a result of her inconstancy towards her lover, and the sense of guilt from which she suffers because of her cheating. Thus Ihāb becomes the victim of her illicit relationship with Turki.

### III. Narrative Techniques:

In his quest for modernising the Arabic novel, Ghalib Halasa employs a variety of narrative techniques. The presentation of events is alternately taken up by the third-person singular narrator and the first person singular. This technique, together with the additional elements which he injects into the novels from his own personal life, invite the reader to assume that the story itself is real and the characters and events, too. This reminds one of the American novelist, Henry Miller's trick, as al-Dhahabi points out,

of using the pronoun "he" in his reference to the character of Henry, without forgetting all the time to extend his finger sarcastically over his nose, hinting that Henry is none but himself<sup>86</sup>.

In almost all Halasa's novels, the protagonist and the narrator are the same, and in some instances, they bear his name and refer to works by the author as if they were by the protagonist.<sup>87</sup> This device is employed to heighten the reader's interest in what seems to be a biographical account of a political exile and not a work of fiction. Thus through the employment of several narrative devices, Ghalib Halasa's fictional world is brought closer to reality in a convincing realism which the author succeeds in achieving.

One of these devices is the inclusion of real historical events that took place in the region, within his novels. In *al-Dahik*, we find references to the Suez crisis of 1956 (1981: pp.67-8), the treaty of 1936 between Britain and Egypt, World War II, the massacre of 'Abbas Bridge in 1946, the war of Palestine in 1948 (1981: p.37) and the Iraqi revolution of 1958 (1981: pp.112-20).

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<sup>86</sup> al-Dhahabi, *op. cit.* p.106.

<sup>87</sup> This is obvious in *al-Khamāsīn* where the protagonist's name is Ghalib and he is trying to write a novel about the Khamsin weather. He is also a Jordanian exiled to Egypt, lives in Cairo and worked for the Chinese News Agency (Sinho), then for the German Democratic Republic's News Agency. Similarly, in *Thalāthah Wujūh Li-Baghdād*, the protagonist who is also the narrator has the same name, Ghalib Halasa, the exiled Jordanian who lived in Egypt and who was expelled to Baghdad after chairing a symposium on American policy in the Middle East in Cairo. He even mentions the publication of his short story collection, *Negroes, Bedouins and Peasants*, which the Iraqi Ministry of Culture published in 1976.

Similarly, in *al-Khamāsīn* we find references to the war of 1967 and the expulsion of all Americans from Egypt (1978: pp.106-7) and references to the Israeli leadership at that time (1978: p.159). In *al-Su'āl*, we find references to the early sixties in Egypt especially the crime of the Grand Avenue<sup>88</sup> and the July socialist revolutions. In *Thalāthah Wujūh* li-Baghdad, we find references to the formation of the Progressive National Front in Iraq which was founded in the second half of the 1970s. In *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl*, we find references to the 1967 June War and the picket of university students in al-Tahrīr Square in Cairo. In *al-Riwā'iyyūn*, we find references to the visit which Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir paid to Egypt before the war broke out.

All these historical facts and many more are included within the fictional world of Halasa's novels in order to give a sense of realism and credibility to works that seem like autobiographies.

A second narrative device which Ghalib Halasa employs so as to reinforce the sense of realism to his novels is the use of documents. These documents either appear as newspaper clippings, or under the title

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<sup>88</sup> For more information about this crime, refer to Ghalib Halasa's introduction to the second edition of *al-Su'āl* specially p.15-21. This same crime was taken up by Naguib Mahfouz in his novel *al-Liṣ wal-Kilāb*. See also Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.105-8. In a footnote El-Enany says, "The story of Sayyid Mahr was inspired by a real-life criminal by the name of Maḥmūd Amin Sulaymān, who also believed that his wife had betrayed him and was out to get her. His story, which captured the public imagination in 1960, was extensively covered by the press. He gave the police a hard time until he was chased" p.230.

“documents”. For example, in *al-Daḥik*, we find documents at the beginning of almost every book (1981: pp.5-12, 32, 41, 131, 159, 266-74). Similarly, we find newspaper clippings in *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* that take the form of advertisements (1981: p.41).

A third narrative device which Halasa employs is that of memoirs. In fact, all his works are written in the form of recollections. In every novel, we find events presented through the recollection of two or more figures, so that every character may contribute to the creation of a comprehensive image. In *al-Daḥik*, for instance, the protagonist recollects the beginning, development and end of his relationship with Nadia. Nevertheless, Nadia's point of view is given space, so that it may illuminate some angles that were neglected or left in the dark (1981: p.303). We also find Colin Anderson's memoirs and the memoirs of an exile who is himself the protagonist (1981: pp.131, 159). In *Sultānah*, events are presented from the memories of different characters: Jiryis, the possible protagonist, narrates the first part of the novel, then we have the second part which is entitled “Recollections,” in which three major characters present events through their own memories: Ṭu'ma, the English language teacher, the ex-Communist Jiryis, and *Sultānah*.

These three narrative devices help the reader to accept, at least temporarily, the illusion of reality and consent to suspend disbelief.

A fourth narrative device which Ghalib Halasa employs in his novels is the manipulation of the dream. As an unconscious activity, dreams become the expression of uninhibited thoughts, an outlet for suppressed emotions, an expectation of the future and a portent of disasters. Halasa employs different



forms of dreams to serve different purposes, nocturnal dreams and nightmares, as well as daydreams. The main protagonists and other characters in Halasa's novels express their thoughts, fears and emotions through these dreams. In *al-Ḍaḥīk* the protagonist's dread of prison finds its outlet in a dream:

We were imprisoned in these nightmarish tunnels for a long time (1981: p.16).

The fear of becoming the victim of oppression, of being accused of a crime which he knows nothing of, haunts him in the dream, and the fear of falling prey to countless social taboos - all these form his nightmares (1981: pp.44-5, 47).

‘Issā's dream which he narrates to the protagonist, a few days before his castration, may stand as an expression of the Freudian idea about breaking taboos. In his dream he finds out that he had an incestuous sexual relation with his mother, without knowing it, a sort of Oedipus Complex (1981: pp.137-8).

This breaking of taboos prognosticates the actual punishment which ‘Issā faces, as a result of breaking political taboos. The narrator of *al-Khamāsīn* comments on the character of Basiūnī and thus explains some ideas already postulated upon:

Can we say something here about the conflict in feelings or the contradictory emotions towards foreigners? Any Freudian analyst who has self-respect sees in foreigners a symbol of the father, and shall discover in Basiūnī's state the contradicting feelings which a son bears towards his father: the desire for killing and replacing the father in his relationship with the mother, and the admiration and desire for metempsychosis. This requires, in our view, a deeper analysis of Basiūnī's

relationship with his father. Not for a single moment do we doubt that because of living and sleeping in one room with the father and mother, Basiūnī had seen the desired mother, in Freudian terms, raped before his eyes, and moan in pain and pleasure more than once. .... It can create a durable Freudian complex that may remain all his life (1978: p.170).

This analysis of Basiūnī's character explains his later dream of being castrated by his father, and may well symbolise Basiūnī's downfall (1978: p.174).

A work that is mainly constructed around the idea of daydreaming is Halasa's novel, *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl*. It is an expression of the frustration experienced by the individual in the Arab world. All the promising, though unrealised, experiences of the past are experienced in daydreams as actualities, a sort of wish fulfilment, a compensation for, and a replacement of, the bitter disappointments of actual life.

The frustration of the human individual under socio-religious and political taboos are expressed in a nightmare which the protagonist of *al-Daḥik* experiences. In this dream the fall of the protagonist and his inability to prevent his fall, because of conditions beyond his power, are condemned by society and he is to pay the price for what was forced upon him (1981: pp.316-7).

The fifth narrative device which Ghalib employs extensively in his novels is the stream-of-consciousness technique. Through this device, the reader moves in different time spans simultaneously and is given access to the most intimate thoughts of the characters. Combined with this narrative device

is the association of ideas, and the internal monologues through which we can see what is going on inside the character's mind, while given the external events by the narrator. For example from *al- Khamāsin*, where Ghalib leaves a woman's apartment after having sex with her, and staying there till dawn:

.... A sixty-year-old man returns home at five o'clock in the morning. He's exhausted in work till five in the morning, and his wife is very young. He married her because he was her father's friend. "You know, Ma'allim Jantira<sup>89</sup> I need a woman to shelter me." He kicks her and orders her to make tea for him, then makes love to her. This villain believes he has all the rights only because he stretches his arm and turns the light on. This is an interior monologue, a stream of consciousness, an association of ideas in a sequence; the fault of J. Jason, Joyce. He did not know that a human being can think of different things at the same time. Hemingway says that his eyes are black pieces on his eyes. By the way, what is Moshe Dayan's job? He leads the army, says to the Arab poets why do you smuggle your poems abroad to be published? We can publish them here. He talks frankly to Fadwa Tūqān,<sup>90</sup> meets the *Makhatir* in The Gaza Strip and threatens them. He carries out excavations, steals some relics, reads two books daily and cracks some jokes about Ben-Gurion.<sup>91</sup> "He has one man in

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<sup>89</sup>Ma'allem is a title given to persons who have experience in a profession. In the Egyptian dialect, it is used as the title 'boss' in English.

<sup>90</sup>Fadwa Tūqān, a well-known Palestinian poet who continued to live in the West Bank under occupation.

<sup>91</sup>David Green Ben Gurion (1886-1973) the first Prime Minister of Israel from 1948-1953. He filled the same post several times in the subsequent years until 1963 when he resigned after the Lavon Scandal.

his team, Golda Meyer".<sup>92</sup> A joke, a sense of humour, in English "wit"; he pronounces it "wet" and they laugh. Imagine Moshe Dayan's words are wet, wet! What difference does it make? They are most likely wet, someone wet them, wet, they wet themselves at night in bed. She is tall and silly, wets herself in bed, puts a blanket under her, a plastic sheet (1978: pp.158-60).<sup>93</sup>

#### IV. Language:

In his novels, Ghalib Halasa employs both classical Arabic and local dialects. This manipulation of diglossia helps the reader to identify the nationality, social class and the educational level of the characters. The narrator uses classical Arabic in introducing the characters, settings and descriptions. However, whenever the narrator enters into a dialogue with one of the characters, the language changes to suit the level of the other character. For instance, when the narrator expresses to the reader the impact Nadia's presence had on his apartment, the language employed is the classical one:

سارت في الصلاة الصغيرة تعدل وضع بعض الكراسي، تلمسها بسبابتها لتأكد من وجود  
التراب، وتتوقف أمام بعض الصور المعلقة على الجدران. ثم انحنى وأخذت تقرأ عناوين  
الكتب، ثم سارت نحو المطبخ وأشعلت البوتوغاز ثم أطفأته. وعندما وقفت بباب حجرة  
النوم تكدر وجهها بسبب الفوضى السائدة.

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<sup>92</sup>Golda Meyer (1898-1978) was a leading figure of the Israeli Labour party, and filled the post of Prime Minister in 1969.

She walked in the small hall, putting chairs in order, touching them with her index finger to feel the dust on them. She stopped in front of the busts on the wall, then bent down to read the titles of some books. She walked towards the kitchen, lit the gas cooker then switched it off. When she stood close to the bedroom door, her face turned grim because of the prevalent disorder (1981: p.38).

The manner of speech reveals the educational level of the characters.

For example, the priest, Ṣalībah, whom we get to know much better in *Sultānah*, appears in *al-Ḍaḥik* as an ignorant person who claims knowledge:

عند العصر كنت أذهب لأزور القسيس. ففي مثل هذه الساعة يجتمع بعض رجال القرية  
عنده يجلسون على شرفة الكنيسة المظلة على مدخل القرية الغربي. وكان القسيس كثيرا ما  
يشن حملة عنيفة على الملحدين ويركزها بشكل خاص على نظرية التطور التي كان ينسبها الى  
فولتير. يقول: عمركم شفتوا غملة تولد جمل؟ عمركو !  
يضحك الجالسون ويقولون " غملة تلد جمل، كلام مجنونة ". فيقول القسيس مزهوا: " فولتير  
الخنزير الملحد يقول لك ممكن ويقول ان الانسان أصله قرد. " وتبرق عيناه ويقول بعنف  
" قرد في عينه وعين اللي خلفوه " .

I used to visit the priest every afternoon. In that hour of the day, men from the village used to gather in the church balcony that overlooked the western entrance of the village. The priest often attacked atheists, and the butt of his campaign was the theory of evolution which he attributed to Voltaire. He said:

"Did you ever see an ant delivering a camel? Did you ever?"

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<sup>93</sup>See also, for example, Halasa, 1980: 42-4; Halasa, 1978: 155-57).

The villagers laughed and said in amazement, "An ant delivering a camel! This is madness."

Then the priest would boastfully say:

"That atheist pig, Voltaire, says it is possible, and that the origin of man is the ape." His eyes shone with violence as he said "Qird fi 'aynu wa 'ayn illi khallafüh. <sup>94</sup>

A language that is neither purely classical nor a local dialect is employed when two educated people are discussing something serious. This is clear in the conversation between the protagonist and Nadia about painting (1981: p.108). Similarly when the protagonist talks to his friend in the cafe, they use a middle language which is closer to the local dialect than to classical Arabic (1981: pp.115-8).

The use of a foreign language in dialogues reveals the characters' desire to emphasise their foreign culture which they believe to be a sign of intellectuality. For example, in *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl*, 'Azzā and Ghalib use English phrases and expressions in their dialogue, and the translation of these phrases and expressions appear in footnotes (1980: pp.50-3). This seems to me an unjustified situation that adds little to the value of the work, and may cause a sort of interruption to the flow of the dialogue. It is worth mentioning in this respect that many of the characters of Ghalib Halasa's novels are foreigners, but their conversations are presented directly in Arabic (1981: pp.145, 158,

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<sup>94</sup> This is slang Jordanian invective which means literally 'he is an ape' and 'son of apes'.

170; Halasa, 1978: 28, 106-7, 125). Even in *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* itself, we come across an incident where Khālīd meets a woman in the club who accompanies him to his apartment; the woman talks to him in English, but her words are given directly to us in Arabic (1980: pp.131-2).

The local dialects which the reader can find in Ghalib Halasa's novels are the Jordanian, the Egyptian and the Iraqi dialects. These dialects are used side by side in some novels, such as *al-Ḍaḥik*, and *Thalāthah*. The dominant dialect in *al-Su'āl*, *al-Khamāsīn* and *al-Riwā'yyūn* is Egyptian, whereas in *Sultānah* the Jordanian dialect is dominant over the others. In *al-Bukā' ala al-Aṭlāl* we find the Egyptian and the Jordanian dialects forming the only language for dialogue.

One additional advantage of Ghalib Halasa's use of the local dialect is that it enabled him to introduce common jokes into his works, which sometimes appear spontaneously and unobtrusively in the flow of the dialogue. These jokes, or light humour, give the reader a sort of comic relief from the poignant seriousness of the novels. For example, when the main character and Nadia meet their friends Aḥmad, Ṣalāḥ and Khalīl in the cafe, after hearing the news of the Iraqi revolution of 1958, Aḥmad expresses his view that it is an American conspiracy, and they all make fun of him. To overcome the tension, Nadia asks him in a polite way if he would like to have something to drink:

قالت: "عايز قهوة يا استاذ أحمد؟"

ابتسم لكلمة استاذ وتردد في الاستجابة للدعوة. وقالت نادية: "هاتي له قهوة على الريحة يا

مدام، مش عالريحة؟"

قال: "لا، سادة".

"أشبعني سادة؟" قالت نادية.

فرد أحمد بعصبية: "النهاردا لازم كلنا نشرب قهوة سادة".

قال صلاح: "بيشرب قهوة سادة زعلان على نوري السعيد"....

قال خليل: "هو نوري السعيد كان يعني أبوه واللا أخوه؟"...

قلت: "يعني ضروري انه يكون نوري السعيد أخوه واللا أبوه؟ كفاية يا أخي انه كان

صاحبه"

Would you like a cup of coffee, *Ustadh*<sup>95</sup> Aḥmad?

He smiled in response to the title, but hesitated in accepting the invitation.

"Please, Madam," said Nadia, "a cup of light coffee."

"A cup of *Sādā* coffee."<sup>96</sup> We all must have *Sādā* coffee," said Aḥmad.

"He must be sad for the loss of Nuri al-Said,"<sup>97</sup> said Khalīl sarcastically.

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<sup>95</sup> *Ustadh* is an expression of respect for men. It is the equivalent of professor, which can be used to address teachers as well as ordinary people.

<sup>96</sup> "Qahwah *Sādā*," Unsugared coffee is usually used on sad occasions in the Arab world. It is the expression of sorrow for something tragic that may have happened.



“Why should he be sad?” wondered Ṣalāḥ “Is Nuri his brother or father?”

“Not necessarily,” I said. “He could be his friend.” (1981: pp.117-8)

One can refer to a similar scene in *al-Khamāsīn* when a messenger - who is a young boy - asks for a five Guinea loan and a few days leave because his mother died. The Chinese manager asks Ghalib to ask him how his mother can die four times, since that is the fourth time in two years he has asked for leave and loans because of his mother's death (1978: pp.21-2).

Such jokes occur in almost all of Halasa's novels (1980: pp.52-3; Halasa, 1988: 221). Nevertheless, there are some situations in which the jokes appear contrived and have no functionality in the work whatsoever.

Through the employment of different linguistic patterns and dialects, Ghalib Halasa manages to give his work a sense of realism that makes his characters more convincing. In some cases, however, the local dialects are given priority over classical Arabic and replace it in descriptive passages, domestic scenes and even in the narrative language itself.<sup>98</sup> Examples of this appear in *al-Su'āl* where the Egyptian dialect is extensively employed by both the characters and the narrator.

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<sup>97</sup>Nuri al-Said was the last Iraqi prime minister under the Iraqi monarchy that was overthrown and savagely slaughtered in the revolution of 1958.

<sup>98</sup>Ali Hussein Khalaf rightly observes that “It often seems as though the local dialect has been established and replaced the classical language” *al-Ḥuriyyah*, no. 958, (March 1980) 71.

The novels of Ghalib Halasa are among the pioneering modern novels of the Arab world. They are among the few works that rejected taboos in politics, sex and religion. His works, however, remain far from having any impact on the production of the novel in Jordan during the 1980s, as they were inaccessible to the Jordanian reader until the author's death in 1989. Whether his works will have an influence on the novel in Jordan in the future is a question that cannot be answered now. However, another Jordanian novelist who contributed to the Arabic novel and whose influence on future generations may be more secure is Mu'nis al-Razzaz whose migration from the world of politics to the literary world is a gain for the world of Arabic literature. Al-Razzaz is the subject of the following chapter.

PART TWO

THE EXPERIMENTAL NOVEL IN  
JORDAN

CHAPTER THREE

MU'NIS AL-RAZZAZ:

THE PREDICAMENT OF THE ARAB  
INTELLECTUAL

Some Jordanian novelists who found themselves dissatisfied with the conventional techniques as a means for expressing reality attempted to look for new ones that may serve their purpose. Reality, as they conceived it cannot be approached by a confident, complacent individual without distorting it and falsifying it. In the Arab world, reality reflects itself through individuals and society in their fragmented, chaotic and contradictory selves, a reflection of the social, political, cultural and economic domains. In the absence of all logical connections and the shifting ground beneath their feet, whether in ideology, social customs, moral values or principles, the ability to present reality through the eyes of an omniscient narrator who holds the lines firmly in his hands, chronologising events and probing into the psychology of his characters seemed inappropriate. They found in Western writers, who gave expression to their own experiences of life, particularly those of the twenties and thirties, a useful starting point for their experimentation. As their Western counterparts, Jordanian novelists had two options: they were, as M. Szabolcsi put it, either to "reflect such a fragmented, disjointed, chaotic and incoherent reality" through their works, or to "concentrate" on what they knew, that is, their art alone.<sup>99</sup> Jordanian writers, however, attempted to explore new techniques and experiment with the form of the novel, so that they may give expression to the "new reality" which they conceived. As has been pointed out earlier, the first experimentation in the novel in Jordan goes back to 1968, when Taysir Sbūl wrote his novel *Ant Mundh al-Yawm* (See Chapter 1, pp.46-9), and

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<sup>99</sup> Szabolcsi, Mikl's. "Avant-Garde, Neo-Avant-Garde, Modernism: Questions and Suggestions". *New Literary History*, 3 (Autumn 1971), p.65.

attempted to portray the fragmentation of the Arab individual, the inner conflicts and the ideological bankruptcy of the political parties through the employment of different narrative techniques that are on the whole unconventional and new to the Arabic novel as a whole. Similarly, in the eighties, a number of Jordanian novelists adopted techniques which they believed to give a better expression of the contemporary Arab status quo than the conventional ones. This experimentation is manifest in the works of Mu'nis al-Razzaz, Elias Farkouh and, to some extent, Ibrahim al- 'Ajlūni. The new techniques can be roughly classified into two groups: Narrative devices pertaining to the method of narration and the presentation of point of view. The second group is more of a thematic nature, relating to the socio-political scene and the ideological forces that form the genesis of confrontation within the world mapped within these works. As I shall show in the following pages, the narrative devices range from the absence of chronology, dispensation with the external characterisation, the polyphonic dialogues, to the use of "the Chinese Box", intertextuality, parody and the juxtaposition of opposites whether in ideology or life. The adoption of such techniques reveals the fragmentation and disconfiguring of the psyche of the Arab individual under the impact of oppressive authoritarian regimes whose repressive and suppressive practices extend beyond the intelligible to the degree of absurdity. Such worlds, as will be shown in the following pages, are the outcome of the experiences of intellectuals under authoritarian regimes who in their failure to confront and challenge real enemies, turn against their own people, humiliating and degrading them, so as to consolidate their power over them and silence any voice of protest that may sound against them.

It should be noted in this respect that these works concentrate on the extreme manipulation of language, labour hard to conceal their objectives and the political powers which these works criticise. One can hardly find a name of a ruler, or a defined geography, apart from gestures that allude indirectly to some countries; and even in such instances, the camouflage makes it possible to shift the situation between several states without declaring any of them explicitly as subject to the work. This purposful ambiguity may be considered as a means of protection against the exposure to censorship or harsh punishment. These works can be justly considered as postmodernist texts, with political character, maintaining their sharp social materials associated with realism, and their ideological commitment towards a free society, without causing damage to their aesthetic value.

The world of Mu'nis al-Razzaz's<sup>100</sup> work requires many social, historical and political elucidation to be thoroughly understood. This is due, according to GHasan 'Abd al-Khaliq, to a strong inclination by the author to approach reality through an all-inclusive perspective (1993: p.9). Mu'nis Munīf al-Razzaz (1951-) is the son of Munīf al-Razzaz, the well-known Arab ideologist who played a key role in formulating the ideology of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party from the early nineteen-fifties up to the late seventies.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The transliteration of Mu'nis al-Razzaz's name is "Mu'nis al-Razzāz,". However his name is not transliterated throughout this work, as he personally gave me his spelling (See p.9).

<sup>101</sup> The father of Mu'nis al-Razzaz was a doctor who was considered to be one of the founding members of The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. He wrote and published many

Born to a family that was both cultured and politically motivated, Mu'nis himself became very much interested in reading both literature and philosophy. Having learnt English at an early age, world literature was made accessible to him at the private school he attended and later in London. His university studies in philosophy also provided him with the opportunity to come into closer contact with Western thought.<sup>102</sup> He joined the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party during the early 1970s, but in 1979, he left the party for good.

The experiences his family underwent have much affinity with those experienced by the protagonists of his literary works, to the extent that made many critics consider his work a sort of autobiography.<sup>103</sup> The bitter disillusionment and the nightmare that replaced the dream of the party taking power drove al-Razzaz to rethink his beliefs and express his disappointment in

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books and articles on current Arab political life. Most notable among his works are: *Aspects of the Modern Arab Life* (1953) which won the Arab League prize; *The Development of the Meaning of Nationalism* (1956), *Freedom and its Problems in Backward Countries* and *The Philosophy of The National Movement*. He was forced to leave Jordan because of his political views. For some time he also felt a sense of disillusionment after seeing the party which he advocated take power in Syria and Iraq. He died in 1984, after spending several years under house arrest in Iraq where his own party was in power.

<sup>102</sup> Mu'nis studied philosophy in The Arab University, Beirut and obtained his degree from The University of Baghdad. He also went to The U.S.A. to join Georgetown University for his postgraduate studies in 1977, but could not apparently tolerate the academic atmosphere.

<sup>103</sup> Chief among these critics Ibrahim Khalil in his book *al-Riwayah al-Urduniyyah fi Rub' Qarn (1967-1993)*; Abdullah Raḍwān: *As'ilatu al-Riwayah fi al-Urdun*, Ibrahim al-Sa'afin *al-Riwayah fi al-Urdun*. All these critics emphasise the autobiographical elements in al-Razzaz's works. In my interview with al-Razzaz, he also mentioned the

literary productions. His wide reading in Classical and modern Arabic and World literature gave his production a wider scope and a comprehensiveness that is easily discernible.

## I. The Novels:

Al-Razzaz produced four novels during the period 1980-1990 in which he attempts to portray the real conditions in the Arab world through the eyes of an educated outsider. It is a world of political oppression, suppression through prisons, torture, sustained suffering and restriction of freedom, destruction, psychological and physical humiliation, rape and even murder. This picture is not depicted as exclusive to one camp or another, but one that arises within all ideological camps. In this world, idealists strive to achieve their idyllic dreams of freedom, democracy and equality. They discover after their prolonged endurance and suffering that they have all the time been contributing to the creation of heinous nightmares. Confronted with such a brutal reality, the main characters resort to escapism, dread of human society and ultimately total withdrawal from social life. The once ambitious cultured dreamers become indifferent addicts and marginal characters. Only a few manage to remain steadfast and true to their beliefs, in spite of all the pressures.

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relevance of his personal and family experiences in many of his works, most notable among them being *I'tirāfāt Kātim Şawt* (1986).



The novels of al-Razzaz are predominantly a struggle for freedom against ruthless, intolerant and autocratic regimes. The outcome of the struggle is predictable, since there is no compatibility between the individuals who resist and the autocratic power that crushes them. This drives al-Razzaz's protagonists to despondency, or heightens their sense of alienation, even in their own homeland and society. As Rasheed El-Enany finds in Naguib Mahfouz's novels during the sixties, al-Razzaz's novels concern themselves with the probing of the human psyche in its confrontation with totalitarian authorities. He succeeds, as Mahfouz does,

in transforming his probing of the predicament of the individual in his confrontation with authority into a consideration of such issues as the meaning of life, and the value of human action, and the alienation of the modern individual from both society and God (1993: p.102)

The gloomy portrait which these novels present brings to one's mind Decoud's sceptical view of Costaguana where he remarks,

There is a curse of futility upon our character: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption. We convulsed the continent for our independence, only to become the passive prey of a democratic parody, the helpless victims of scoundrels and cut-throats, our institutions a mockery, our laws a farce<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Nostramo: A Tale of the Seaboard*. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1921), p.146. Originally published in 1904 by Messrs. Harper Brothers.

As a part of their escapism from oppressive forces, the main characters try to create their own imaginary worlds through writing fiction. Nevertheless, and because of their actual frustration in the real world, their projects either fail to materialise, or their works are confiscated before seeing the light. In some instances, the imaginary worlds whose creators intend to be an expression of their idyllic dreams, turn into new nightmares that are no less horrifying than their real world.

(1) *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit*<sup>105</sup> (*Living Beings In The Dead Sea*)

In 1982, al-Razzaz published his first novel, *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit* which reveals the disappointment experienced by the Arab intellectual as a result of the collapse of his dream. The visionary tolerates all sorts of torture, deprivation and suffering. The outcome of the utopia that he had striven to create turns out to be a dreadful nightmare. 'Inād al-Shāhid, the protagonist, leaves his country for the dreamstate as a political exile. Much to his surprise and dismay, he finds out that his comrades who were once oppressed and victimised became oppressors and victimisers themselves. After a desperate

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**105** Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1982 (First edition). This work has been translated into English by Elein 'Abd al-Malik as a dissertation submitted to the University of Jordan for her M.A. degree in translation. The English translation will appear under the title *Alive in the Dead Sea* which is almost a literal translation of the Arabic title. My reservation concerning this translation of the title relate first to the fact that the Arabic word *Aḥiā'* is a plural form which is not conveyed by the epithet 'alive', and second to the fact that the Arabic term *Aḥiā'* also refers to all forms of life, both living creatures and plant life. 'Alive', in contrast, seems to refer to human beings only.

attempt to rectify the situation, 'Inād decides to leave his dreamstate for his homeland where he becomes an addict and drunkard, who attempts to write his memoirs.

Several important features characterise this work in terms of content. The first is the handling of time and place as content and form. The Sufi thesis that place is a vessel and time is water which is coloured according to its container is a recurrent concept in the work. "The Sufis said the colour of water is that of the containing vessel. I said: the vessel is the place and water is time." (1982: p.7).

This implies that the movement and rhythm of time depend on the place. Thus in his city of birth, "time is stagnant, dead," while in Beirut time is "roaring, flowing and fighting." (1982: p.7). 'Inād wakes up, and tries to recollect the place where he is staying. A long list of rooms, places and cities pass through his memory. When all of a sudden his eyes fall upon "the damaged round clock on the wall," he immediately recognises the place:

my city of birth, and in no time, boredom crept as a gnarled creature. (1982: p.10).

In the city where he was born, time is "narcissist. All through the week, month, the year, moments repeat themselves, as though I live in the belly of the ship-of-the-desert, incessantly ruminating time." (1982: p.11). "Beirut is the two lungs and oxygen, and we were suffering from chronic pneumonia." (1982:p.17). And it is also

a careless girl. Streets walk in it, walls run, pavements trot, buildings waver, rise and then fall down. Windows open their wide-eyed look towards the tempestuous sea, towards sky-

climbing mountains that tremble and rise, then climb down a fog-breathing hill. (1982: p.116).

The place, then, in al-Razzaz's work figures out as a moulding force that affects time and the nature of life in it. A second characteristic feature of *this novel* is its oscillation between three levels of consciousness: waking, dreaming and hallucination. The line that separates these three levels is blurred, because they overlap and intermingle. This indeterminacy plays a functional role within the novel in terms of revealing the absurdity and incredibility of harsh reality, to the extent that makes it analogous to, if not totally identical with, the worlds of hallucination and nightmare.

Who can tell the strict boundaries that separate between waking and the nightmare, between illusion and reality, between reality and the dream, between the dream and inadvertence, between the vision and hallucination? (1982: p.169).

The interplay of these three levels of human consciousness is felt right from the beginning of the work. It is even explicitly displayed in the introduction to the novel which is written by Mithqāl Ṭuḥaymir al-Za'al, the editor of 'Inād's memoirs and an active participant in the novel itself. He says:

My friend 'Inād used to write in times when he felt alertness, nervous control, clarity of brain and keenness of senses. He even used to take large quantities of stimulants so as to obtain the highest degree of concentration and sobriety. Then he would suddenly turn into a savage wolf, throw away the robes of the sagacious fighter and plunge deep into the worlds of illusion and inertia that stretch between slumber and waking in the realm of horrible visions and hysterical hallucinations. There, he used to see and hear what we neither see nor hear,

walk on seas while on land, and take drugs extravagantly until he fell asleep; and then, and that is what arouses my curiosity because it remains incomprehensible to my dialectical logic and scientific analysis, starts talking and chatting in his sleep, while a recording machine kept a record of it all. .... The worlds of slumber interlock into the worlds of hallucination and mesh into the world of waking. (1982: p.6-9).

This confusion of consciousness is the product of the sudden change in surroundings, a lack of discipline in determining enemy camps from friendly ones, and the change in priorities that govern relations. This makes individuals unable to differentiate between reality and illusion, or between waking experiences and nightmares. When 'Inād enters the Major's office in his dreamstate, he finds him in the company of a chief detective from 'Inād's country of birth, who previously tortured and imprisoned him. This sight made 'Inād doubt his senses and consciousness:

My eyeballs protruded, belying my sight. I said to myself, I must be in a dream. I shouted inaudibly: But the chief is a detective officer in the enemy sister-state!

The Major shrugged his shoulders and curled up his lower lip, while the Chief's belly shook in laughter. The Major said listfully: Do you still with your squinting look see the priorities of revolution and not those of the state? The Chief is my friend, as the priorities of the state require. Go, apologise to him, and I will forgive you.

I shouted, and denouncingly hit the air with my fists. I said I've read all The Greek tragedies, from alpha to omega, but never came across a tragic fate that resembles mine. Do you set my apology to the man who imprisoned me for ages, because of my trust in you, as a precondition for obtaining your forgiveness?

The Major nodded. He raised his glass, cheered The Chief and both signed a security treaty for the legal prosecution of dissenters, and I was a dissenter. (1982: pp.13-14).

The analogy between waking and nightmare in their absurd and illogical states creates this sense of confusion. Thus the world of *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit* is a merging of these different levels of human consciousness.

(2) *I'tirāfāt Kātim Ṣawt*<sup>106</sup> (*Confessions of a Silent Revolver*)

If in his first novel al-Razzaz managed to bring to light the tragic end of an idyllic dream, and the collapse of the ideal for which the cultured individual tolerated prolonged suffering. His second novel, *I'tirāfāt Kātim Ṣawt* (*Confessions of a Silent Revolver*) explores a yet more tragic aspect of the intellectual's dilemma. Doctor Murād, a partisan theorist and thinker who suffered much because of his beliefs, suddenly, and without any clear reasons, finds himself under house arrest. His wife, his daughter and he himself are prevented from any contact with the outside world, this time by the General who is the leader of the same party to which Doctor Murād belongs. His previous bodyguards now become his jailers, and his closest friend becomes his oppressor. The only link he and his family have with the external world is the weekly telephone call from his son who happened to be abroad when the

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<sup>106</sup> Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1986. I was told by the author that this work is currently being translated into Spanish by Susan Awāmleh, a postgraduate student in Spain.

decision to put him under house arrest was taken. Even this link remains conditional, since the family learnt that any real communication of their real situation and the suffering they endure will bring an end to the telephone service. The link is ultimately broken when Yūsuf, an ex-member of the same party, assassinates Dr. Murād's son, Aḥmad, by using a silent revolver. The motive for the crime is purely personal: Yūsuf, who is all the time aware of his weakness and aware, too, of Dr. Murād's innate strength, decides to murder Aḥmad in an attempt to experience the pleasure of extracting a tear from the unflinching father. To heighten their suffering, the General makes the family's most intimate private affairs known to the guards who through hidden cameras and microphones can see and hear whatever goes on inside the house. Dr. Murād keeps his high spirits, in spite of the profound suffering, and writes new books that are confiscated by the guards as soon as he finishes writing the manuscripts.

A major characteristic feature of this work is the drive for domination which takes different forms ranging from the desire to control human individuals, to controlling time, place, life, death and even objects.

One of the forms in which this feature is manifested is constant observation. Everything inside the house and every word spoken inside it is seen and heard by the guards who take their next step accordingly. The daughter says in her memoirs:

The eyes of the guards from over the wall gaze at us, penetrate these glassy walls; and we, my father, mother and myself, try like thieves suddenly exposed to dazzling lights, to hide opposite an inner wall, or behind a door that may conceal the

nakedness of this sight-permitting glassy house, awaiting the veils of darkness to cover us like a robe or a cloak at night. I feel naked. My thoughts even seem to be seen and revealed. We all wait for the darkness and the growth of bougainvillaea (1986A: p.10).

This act of observation does not always remain the prerogative of the jailers. In the dark, Dr. Murād and his family can observe the guards who are in turn exposed to dazzling light, while the family stay in the dark (1986A: p.13). The circle even widens to enclose a larger proportion of the people than Dr. Murād's family and their guards. The security service is divided into several sectors, each one keeping the other under strict surveillance( 1986A: p.39). The Lieutenant who installed the surveillance equipment in Dr. Murād's residence and all the hotels in the country becomes the prey of his own fears that other security sectors may have installed similar equipment in his flat and in his car. His fear of being observed prevents him from making love to his wife at home (1986A: p.37).

Yūsuf who silences the last voice that used to communicate with Dr. Murād's family from the outside world, ironically attempts to establish communication with Sylvia (or Sulāfah), Aḥmad's lover who happens to be deaf and who can only communicate by lip reading. The employment of such a character for communication with Yūsuf provides a commentary on the whole process of communication between the murderers and the outside world, or between the oppressors and the oppressed. His attempt fails because of his thick moustache which covers his upper lip and only allows her to read half words, a symbol, perhaps of the barriers that stand in the way of establishing such a communication.



(3): *Matāhah al-A‘rab fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb*<sup>107</sup> (*The Maze of The A‘rāb in Miragescrapers*)

If the first two novels are explicit criticisms of the oppressive political and military dictatorships and the predicament of the intellectual in such environments, al-Razzaz’s third novel *Matāhah al-A‘rab fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb* can be considered as an exploration of the modern Arab individual’s psychology. This exploration takes the form of a journey through historical periods by an individual who is the product of the past combined with the present modern age.

Ḥasanayn al-Adam is a scientist who believes in scientific thought, who lectures on the techno-electronic age, while at the same time displaying a superstitious character enslaved by the legacy of the past. This duplicity in his character is exposed to the reader right from the beginning of the work:

“I left the department for scientific research after I had delivered my lecture on the relationship between the techno-electronic age and the collective

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**107** Beirut: al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1986. This work was translated by Muḥammad ‘Aṣfūr, a professor of English at the University of Jordan, but has not been published for purely technical reasons. Since two novels appeared in this year by al-Razzaz, the subsequent reference to this novel within the text will be indicated by the letter (B) following the date of publication, whereas the first one, *I‘tirāfāt Kātim Ṣawt* will be indicated by the letter (A) following the year of publication.

unconscious. A group from the audience followed me and spoke to me. I emphasised that what Brezinski<sup>108</sup> says is something very serious and that the process of unmasking the collective unconscious which governs us should be undertaken in the light of science and its instruments and means. I said we cannot stand in the face of challenges relying upon amulets, sorcery, witchcraft and juggling. I stopped, looked at them, apologised and told them that I was busy and have no free time. I'm a man whose time is of gold. I am a man who appreciates the value of time, although I am from The Orient." (1986B: p.9).

Nevertheless, and in spite of this impressive introduction of Hasanayn, we find him in no time picking up a fallen loaf of bread from the street, kissing it, wiping his forehead with it and placing it on a high wall<sup>109</sup> (1986B: p.10).

The exploration proper of the collective unconscious within the individual begins after Hasanayn wakes up from a coma caused by a shot in the head. The reader is made to realise the legacy of the past, on the present, through the behaviour of individuals separately and collectively. As individuals, they recognise Hasanayn and deal with him as an ordinary person. In the presence of other people, they ignore seeing him, for fear that they may be accused of seeing ghosts. Thus they are unable to rely upon their senses in

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<sup>108</sup>Brezinski was President Carter's national security adviser and who believed that through mass communication, the U.S.A can control the whole world. The reference here is to Brezinski's ideas and their impact on the Arab world.

<sup>109</sup>In many parts of the Middle East it is considered an ill omen and grievous sin to allow bread to be trodden under people's feet.

separating reality from illusion. The author takes this even further by making Balqīs, Um Sulayman's widowed daughter, feel free to have sex with him on the assumption that he is a mere ghost. However, after she becomes pregnant, she commits suicide by setting fire to herself.

The modern Arab individual is portrayed in this work as an accumulation of layers from the deep past with a modern skin that hides the past beneath it. This image is best expressed in the novel through the following fantastic episode:

A Bedouin was in a desert shimmering with mirage and travelling on the back of his camel followed by a caravan of buses loaded with Arab and foreign tourists. The camel and the caravan suddenly stopped. They all looked up and saw a sight that confused their hearts and their blood vessels were shrunk in terror. When the Bedouin returned to his tribe, he swore that he and the travellers with him had seen a huge structure in the desert collapsing, the higher storeys fall down and the lower ones rise from underneath, as though some demon lodging below was throwing them upwards. He said that a storey in the middle which was neither Oriental nor Occidental remained suspended in the air as if carried on the stretched palms of the wind. It was neither raised on visible pillars, nor pulled up by a ceiling. (1986B: pp.376-77).

This suspended storey, it seems, is the present Arab mentality which is neither itself, in the sense of belonging to its past history, nor totally modern, in the sense of adopting standards of Western civilisation and assimilating them. The novel has several characteristic features which deserve to be discussed in some detail. One of these features is the author's reliance upon several ideas expressed by Jung, Brezinski, Ibn Khaldun and al-Jabiri on the

collective conscious. The novel attempts to analyse the composite character of the Arab individual. This analysis comes through presenting several lives of Ḥasanayn <sup>110</sup> that spread over the whole of human history. His first life begins in the deep past "before Man had known farming, writing and the division of labour, from Cain to Pinochet<sup>111</sup>" (1986B: .p6); and his lives go on until the present day:

From the bottom of profound time until tomorrow, I run and run. Panting is a circle drawn in the air by the Ottoman officer who said: Do not leave its circumference. Its span is a thousand years and a year engulfing the whole globe from pole to pole, from Cain to Ja'far al-Numayri,<sup>112</sup> from Detroit to Aden (1986B: p. 7).

This struggle for domination and survival is an ancient, yet modern phenomenon. This Darwinian principle is illustrated through the lives of

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<sup>110</sup> By using the name "Ḥasanayn" for his protagonist, Mu'nis al-Razzaz employs a linguistic device to express the duplicity of the character. In the first place, this name can be used as a proper name quite common in Egypt and Sudan. Secondly, being a dual form, the name could be employed as a reference to two persons with the same name. Mu'nis al-Razzaz uses this name in both senses. In addition, the protagonist's own name seems to be unfixed; he appears in some instances with the name Adam which is also an inclusive name referring to the whole human race.

<sup>111</sup> General Augusto Pinochet (1915-) seized power in Chile after leading a bloody

coup against President Allende and his socialist government in 1973.

<sup>112</sup> Major-General Ja'far Mohammed Numayri was the Sudanese military officer who seized power in his country in May 1969 after a bloodless military coup which he had led. He was later overthrown in 1985 by a military coup.

Hasan I and Hasan II that prove life to be repetitions of the same phenomenon in different forms (1986B: pp.47-50).

Brezinski's proposition of Americanising the world through mass media and telecommunications is seen also within this perspective. Finding that his flat has been invaded by Iskander the pimp, with a group of men and a whore, Hasanayn lectures them about the nature of this struggle (1986B: pp.146-156). It is the conflict between "us" and "them", between the "I" and the "other":

The basic conflict in the world, ladies and gentlemen, is between the cowboys, that is, them, and the camelboys, that is, us. It is a struggle for survival, not for borders, a struggle for existence. (1986B: p.157).

A second characteristic feature of the novel is its political criticism. This criticism takes the form of revealing the deceptive nature of the institutionalisation and modernity within the Arab states. Ignorance and superstition are perpetuated by the press in its handling of social and political issues. Fighting in The Sudan is described by one of the newspapers as "an ordinary thing that should not arouse anxiety or cause any worry; and that the death of eighty persons is not really a serious event." (1986B: p.316).

Similarly, in "The State of Science and Faith<sup>113</sup>", a high-ranking official announces that "The Virgin may reappear this year, as She has done in

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<sup>113</sup> This expression, "The State of Science and Faith" was used by The Egyptian President, Anwar al-Sadat, in his description of his country. The reference within the novel discloses the absurdity of this combination through the announcement by an Egyptian Minister that the Virgin's appearance in Egypt was not an illusion, but a real fact.

the past. He invited foreign tourists to visit his country, so that they may not miss the opportunity of seeing The Virgin.” (1986B: p.316).

In the same context the author refers to a Jordanian daily newspaper which published an item about “an Egyptian woman who obtained a divorce from the court because her husband got married to a Jinni lady” (1986B: p.113).

The rulers are copies of the same character, even though their names may change. They are all fragments of Dhiyāb (Wolves) who fragmented into a thousand wolves and a wolf. After quarrelling among themselves, “The remaining majority of the wolves left the council, every wolf held an independent, separate region in a separate maze, while the First Wolf remained in the city.” (1986B: p.300).

In each state, a Consultative Council is formed of sleeping or dead people while The Presidential Palace is sealed with gateless walls and artillery pieces, and tanks surround it from the inside (1986B: p.314). People are kept under strict surveillance by secret cameras installed everywhere. These cameras are installed in “bedrooms, corridors, toilets, tents, dens, streets, bins, graves and even in hats” (1986B: pp.354-55).

The suicide option for any individual is facilitated. Ḥasanayn discovers as he lies exhausted on his bed, after returning from an interrogation, “some hard object” under his pillow:

"I lifted the pillow and found a loaded revolver under it. .... I said to myself: They left no clothes, no shoes, towels or sheets or paper. Why did they leave a loaded revolver?" (1986B: pp.279-80).

A third characteristic feature of this novel is its insistence on the unrealistic nature of things within its world. The title itself suggests this state of loss and deception. Everything in the world of the novel is counterfeit and false. Characters are hypocritical and pretentious, no more real than the things they use or see. Right from the beginning of the novel and up to its end, this characteristic feature is a recurrent motif. Thus, for example, Hasanayn declares:

"My passport is counterfeit, my face is a mask, my body is a shirt, because I am the perfect despondency, the one who saw the perfection of despair, perfection of blindness. I am the perfection of imperfection. I am the perfect victim and the comic tragedy. .... My form and structure are a narrative without action. As for my weapon, nothing can compete with the strength of its despair. Fate credited me with the grace of vanity and bestowed a tragic heroism on me." (1986B: p.5).

In this world of sheer mirage, the senses perceive phenomena, though nothing satisfactory comes out of them. Water, clothes, shoes, telephones, voices, cars and even food have their tangible form to all senses, but in their essence, they are mere mirages and illusions. When The Scientist suggests the scanning of Hasanayn's skull, so as to find the line that separates reality from illusion, Hasanayn loses his temper and says:

“You are an illusion, your equipment, your hotels, your institutions, your structures, your radios, your victories, your armies, your consultative councils, all are fantasies and mere illusions. .... I heard my voice roar in the amazed and terrified faces: illusions and mirage, vanity of vanities is your science, your existence; your twisted memory, misconstrued history.” (1986B: p.330).

Deception and fraud remain the dominant traits of the Arab World portrayed in the work, from its early history to the present day:

“The General who pretends to perform the role of the Awaited Blessed Redeemer, why doesn’t he leave the stage? We are fed up with him. He is an enduring idol, and so is the Colonel. Had they not destroyed the idols a thousand years ago..... .... The traitor of yesterday is the hero of today, the hero of today will be the traitor of tomorrow. .... The cities of salt began to melt, they were an illusion.” (1986B: pp.381-83).

(4) *Jum ‘a al-Qafārī: Yawmiyyāt Nakira*<sup>114</sup> (*Jum ‘a al-Qafārī:*

*Memoirs of an Unknown*)

If the previous three novels deal with the idea of conflict between both individuals and the political autocracy, as well as the inner conflict within the

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<sup>114</sup> Beirut: al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1990.



individual's own psyche as a result of the conflict between the patrimonial legacy and the modern European concepts, al-Razzaz's fourth novel, *Jum 'a al-Qafārī: Yawmiyyāt Nakira* (Jum 'a al-Qafārī: Memoirs of an Unknown), presents a somewhat different perspective. It is a study of an ordinary, unknown human being, estranged in his own society, a theme that can be easily traced in Camus' *The Stranger* and Sartre's *Nausea*. Jum'a is the son of a middle-class family who knows little about his city, Amman, apart from its Western part where he lives. Returning from Europe after receiving psychological treatment for the shock which resulted from his father's sudden death in an explosion that destroyed the Cabinet Building, Jum 'a fails to accommodate himself to the social milieu and ends up as a lunatic. Introducing himself to the reader, Jum 'a says:

"Yes, I am Jum 'a al-Qafārī, the Don Quixote of this age, as my sister 'Ā'ishah says.... Yes, I am Jum 'a al-Qafārī, the unknown in an age that no longer has any giants, the last of whom were De Gaulle and Mao Tse Tong."  
(1990: p.7).

Al-Razzaz sees in this work of his a new trend in the Arabic novel, and says:

"Modern and contemporary Arabic literature lack the unknown character who lives in a state of estrangement on the margin. The character of Jum 'a al-Qafārī is an attempt to portray such a character in Jordan. There is a group of people who live marginally in their own country, to whom the whole

country is reduced to West Amman<sup>115</sup> and who do not even know East Amman. There are among this group victims who are unable to acclimatise in their social milieu, and such is the case of Jum 'a, the outcast who knows not whether he rejects society willingly, or whether it is society that has cast him out." (quoted in 'Abd al-Khaliq, 1993: p.100).

There are several recurrent themes in this work that relate it to other Western literary productions. The first is a lack of communication between Jum'a and the other characters. This heightens Juma's suffering and estrangement and some of the scenes in the novel remind one of dramatic scenes in the works of Adamov and Ionesco.

Jum'a takes words for their literal meanings and cannot go beyond to the figurative which is the common usage among people. He can draw analogies or parallelisms, but cannot see meanings beyond these (See Section III. below).

Another theme that prevails in the work is a lack of action coupled with a wild imagination. This is expressed through the Quixotic nature of Jum'a the dreamer who desires to write a novel in which his protagonist, Nu 'man al- 'Ammūni, undertakes adventures and experiences which Jum'a himself wished to have. The Cervantes' protagonist, Don Quixote, is replaced by an Arab alternative which has a similar linguistic sound, 'Awn Kishot, or 'Awn al-Kyashṭa. The Arabisation implies that Don Quixote represents a

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<sup>115</sup> Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1990.

typical Arab hero for the protagonist who sees more value in imagination than in deeds.

Lacking the ability to act himself, Jum 'a designs a hero that is assumed to perform roles he himself wishes to achieve. However, this scheme which takes much of Jum 'a's time and thought does not materialise.

This lack of practicality is due to Jum 'a's unrealistic approach to life, and his continuous escape to the dream world of the imagination. He falls in love with women from the world of the imagination, ranging from novels to the world of the cinema, not real women of flesh and blood:

"I am Jum 'a who loved scores of women from Anna Karenina - whom Tolstoi invented, to Nadia Lutfi, whom the Egyptian cinema exhibited. No, I did not love a single woman of flesh and blood. Such a love corrupts the dream, undoes the riddle that gives life a mysterious significance." (1990: pp.5-6).

Escapism from the real world takes a new form in Jum 'a's joining The Shakers,<sup>116</sup> or "Darawish", an escape to the metaphysical. In "Dar al-Qur'an," he joins the group in their movements in a ritualistic performance that ends up with Jum 'a's repressed feelings being released, and he feels a sort of peace of mind that only lasts for the day (1990: pp.146-7).

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<sup>116</sup> Although 'Quakers' is a more suitable translation, I have rendered this word as 'Shakers' in order to avoid any ambiguity with the English Society of Friends.

Jum 'a's estrangement in his own society is caused mainly by the deceptive, fraudulent, opportunistic and insincere nature of that society. This drives him further into his escapist tendencies and makes him relapse into a new childhood. His realisation that life is but a play, and that the world is a mere stage drives him to say before the end of the novel:

"I do not feel pain. I am performing roles in a play that will not last forever. In the right time, the producer will come, pat me on the back and say: Well done, Jum'a, may God keep you healthy. You have done your job . You are now free to leave your agonising role and the stage. Then all this agony and loneliness will come to an end." (1990: p.206).

## II. Characterisation and Narrative Techniques:

In his novels during the eighties, al-Razzaz adopts narrative techniques and devices that make his works close to what is currently classified as metafictional novels. However, because of the negative connotations associated with this term and its synonyms, I am less inclined to use such a label for his works.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Many critics use this term to define modern and postmodern fiction in a negative sense. They also use metafiction as a synonym for introspective fiction, narcissistic fiction, self-conscious fiction, anti-fiction, problematic fiction or even masturbatory fiction. Such definitions, in my view have a value judgment which in itself does not contribute to the appreciation of the work of art, but rather places restrictions on the expectations and demotes the work in a deprecatory manner.

The world of his novels is an image of the ruptured psyche of the individual in the contemporary Arab world where instability, absence of institutionalised traditions and the dominance of confusion stand in sharp contrast to the past with its established tradition, stability and clarity. It is therefore possible to view al-Razzaz's method of narration and characterisation as means of giving expression to the contemporary reality in its manifest form.

### (A) Characterisation:

The novels of Mu'nis al-Razzaz present two main sets of characters. Between these two sets falls a wide variety of background characters that are meant to highlight certain features or characteristics of either of the two sets, or to provide a sort of comic relief from the gloomy and repressive atmosphere that dominates his works.

This rough division can be applied to the three first novels, while the fourth one, *Jum'a al-Qafārī* has a quite different set of characters, though Jum'a himself can be considered, as we shall see, among the group of amateur thinkers.

The first set of characters comprises the idealists, dreamers, thinkers and intellectuals. The characters of 'Inād al-Shāhid, Mithqāl, Dr. Murād, and Ḥasanayn are all among this group. They are all dreamers struggling to attain their ideal dreams in a world where there is no room for freedom of expression. They all helped to prepare the nightmares which they try to escape

from, after a bitter and enduring suffering under previous political autocracies which they struggled to replace with their idealistic dreams. The irony is that the frustration of their hopes comes as a result of the success of the political parties they had helped to bring to power.

Al-Razzaz's approach in depicting his characters is mainly a psychological one. Very little physical details are given about his characters, and we can hardly draw a different appearance from one character or another. They practically reveal themselves to us through their own subjective thoughts, either in recollecting their past, or through exposing their present situations. This approach deprives al-Razzaz's characters of the sense of immediacy and excitement. In some instances, the characters present a sort of abstraction that makes them closer to ideological concepts than real characters.

'Inād is a dreamer of liberty, equality and a better life, a committed partisan who wishes to achieve his dream. But when his dream is achieved, it becomes his nightmare. The same could be said of his comrade, Mithqāl, who edits 'Inād's memoirs and publishes them. He is much of a reader, and much is revealed about his mentality and about his great hunger for reading. Thus Beirut stands as a symbol of freedom and enlightenment that Mithqāl strives to attain (1982: pp.171-2).

Mithqāl also desires to establish a syndicate for the workers of his father's factory which closed down as a result of tribal feuds:

Mithqāl insists on establishing a syndicate for the factory workers in the neighbouring town. I laughed hysterically aloud: a syndicate for half Bedouins, half peasants who work in the factory. The factory is closed down because of a feud. A

Bedouin worker killed another Bedouin worker, and there was a tremendous disturbance ending with the closure of the factory. (1982: p.15).

The Doctor in *I'tirāfāt Kātim Şawt* is also a dreamer who believes in an ideology. He is the victim of his own dream:

He is similar to Sinnimar.<sup>118</sup> Sinnimar had a face that resembled his, and his fate was likewise. Didn't he participate in constructing this edifice? Didn't he contribute to the creation of this nightmare? Didn't he and his arch-friends dig this well into which we have fallen? He participated! Oh, for the malice of old enemies (1986A: p.15).

Similarly, the character of Ḥasanayn is presented through his own views and thoughts, not by an observer's own point of view. However, we find some references to his character by other characters in the work. Nevertheless, these references are mainly attempts to probe into his psyche, rather than to depict his external features. In the hotel-like building amidst the desert mirage, a woman says about Ḥasanayn:

You are like this building, what appears is modern, but underneath there are Abbassid and Andalusian storeys, Ummayyad storeys and so on, until we reach the Seven-sleeper's den and the primitive man's cave. You are counterfeit, you are a mask (1986B: p.289).

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<sup>118</sup> Sinnimar is an architect who, according to one of the myths, built a fortified palace for a king and informed the latter that nobody can destroy it. Sinnimar pointed out that there was only one brick in that palace which, if removed, would cause it all to collapse. The king asked him if anyone else knew this fact. Sinnimar told him that none knew of it apart from himself. The king killed him immediately, so that none would ever know of it.

His wife gives more hints about his psychological disposition:

You always refused to take off your clothes in front of me, and I used to prefer approaching you when the room was dark to know your body. You were a reactionary progressive one, perhaps a false one (1986B: p.88).

The second set of characters present the military group whose major role is the repression and suppression of any dissenting individuals from the main policies of the autocrats. This group includes the Major, the Lieutenant, the General and the *dhiāb* (the wolves). This set of characters is presented in two different methods: the first is through the eyes of their victims, i.e. the idealists and dreamers. The second method is through their own thoughts. By employing both methods, al-Razzaz attempts to present a negative portrait of the military characters. When the Major reveals his plans for tricking 'Inād into believing that there is a plot by some enemies against him, the plan is revealed directly to the reader through the Major's own words (1982: pp.55-64). The real purpose of this plan is to put 'Inād himself under observation, by employing secret informers as guards. However, all the guards are alike, "those who protect him from others, and those who protect others from him" (1982: p.65).

A similar situation occurs when the Major plans to arrest Maryam, 'Inād's friend, the revolutionary woman. The Major reveals his plan through a direct internal monologue:

I ordered the arrest of his friend, Maryam. As I expected, he came to mediate on her behalf. He even came in a heated storming anger, hitting the table with his fists, and out of his eyes a wild glistening spilled out. He said she is not an adherent



of the Shu'ubiyya<sup>119</sup> and he described my men as asses. I concealed my wrath, and with the cunning of an officer who works as an engineer of mine-fields and later works in The Detective Department, I declared my total ignorance of the whole case, and in much more vigorous terms than his, I denounced the deed. I called an officer, and in the presence of 'Inād struck him on the face and ordered the immediate release of Maryam. Before he left my office, another officer came with a bulky file, opened it in front of me, exactly as I planned, and there, we found a picture of Maryam, naked, making love with some person beneath Lenin's picture. Also in that file, was a photocopy of a hand-written letter in which Maryam accuses The President of chauvinism, and describes Abd al-Ḥamd as Ivan The Terrible. She also says in that letter - and this is the crux of the matter - that 'Inād is a stupid idiot, and that exploiting him in the service of our own goals is taken for granted, because "I easily ensnared him". Here I began trapping his mind, filling it with suspicions. My face changed, my expression grimmed, my lips wrinkled, my nose widened, and my forehead narrowed. I shouted, turning a fiery look at 'Inād: "And we thought she was innocent? Return this whore to jail." (1982: p.73).

Such negative qualities are always revealed by the characters themselves, so as to give them more credibility. The qualities of Yūsuf, the murderer of Dr. Murād's son, Aḥmad, are revealed directly through his own confessions. In order to place Aḥmad under his direct observation, laying the ground for the assassination, Yūsuf says:

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<sup>119</sup> Hans Wehr defines al-Shu'ubiyya in his dictionary as "a movement within the early Islamic Commonwealth of Nations which refused to recognise the privileged

I became impatient because of his indifference which was shown in his features. I started warning him of the concealed dangers that surround him. I told him of imaginary rumours about the necessity of liquidating him. I went on attracting him to the magnetic circle of fear by a predominately, devilish inscrutable power, until a genuine plant of anxiety cropped out of his eyes. I experienced an unmatched primitive ecstasy permeating my whole entity (1986A: p.66).

The character of the General is revealed only through Dr. Murād's words and through the practices of the Lieutenant. He is fond of imposing his views on everyone, and does not approve of natural human behaviour. He is also fond of drawing analogies. When Dr. Murād's wife asks about the reason the General gave for placing her husband under house arrest, Dr. Murād says:

I told you he is fond of drawing analogies. He said, our state is a paper-made shoe measuring 45, your foot is 35 in measure. Then he said to me: with you, we are a fly lying on its back, without you, we will be a fly lying on its stomach ready for take-off and launch. He was angered by my interview which I gave to a Gulf newspaper in which I said that I used to skip my university lectures so as to listen to a song by Um Kulthum. He said the member of the Command should not reveal his secrets to the public, didn't you think what may happen to the veneration of the state? (1986A: p.33).

Female characters appear in all four novels as either educated, revolutionary and unconventional women, or simple, naive, uneducated superstitious ones. Maryam is a revolutionary, educated woman who understands the core of the oriental approach towards women's rights and

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position of The Arabs".

criticises that perspective. She is a revolutionary woman, both in social and political terms. When her comrade, al-Ghazzāwi, says to her that he expects if they get married, she will stay at home until their future son 'Ādil reaches the age of four, she immediately replies:

No, Sheikh!<sup>120</sup> Should I stay at home like those tamed ones?  
And why do you presuppose that I will deliver a male child?  
Why didn't you say if you give birth to 'Ādilah? You favour  
males. You claim to be a revolutionary, while in your essence  
you are a reactionary person. (1982: p.136).

Maryam also comprehends the oriental mentality that treats sex as a kind of affront for women. She has experienced this mentality in different situations. The Israelis raped her in 'Asqalān Prison, and in another Arab prison she was raped again (1982: p.54). She asks 'Inād as she comes to his flat in order to have an affair with him:

In your view, making love is a defamation for a woman? Do  
you see in it an encroachment on her dignity and a means of  
disgracing a woman? .... In both prisons, they had the same  
view towards sex as you

Similarly, the character of Mrs. Murād is an unconventional, rebellious one. She used to go out, putting on her brother's clothes, ride his bicycle and meet her lover who later became her husband (1986A: pp.43-48). She is an educated woman who reads world literature. When talking about their situation under house arrest, and the suffering she endures, she says:

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<sup>120</sup> This is an expression of disapproval used whenever someone hears a statement which he disagrees with. The person referred to as "Sheikh," does not necessarily have such a position as the head of a tribe or as an Alderman.

The past lost its vindication, why did I endure their imprisonment? Why did I bear the pain patiently? Everything turned into nothing. When sense disappeared, we willingly paid a high price for the sake of the dream. It turned out to be a shell that closed over us, and a nightmare which choked us. .... Why did we walk to our Golgotha, inch by inch? Yesternight, I dreamt that I am Sisyphus carrying my rock and climbing up the hill (1986A: p.13).

In her meditation on death, Mrs. Murād says:

I read one of the Western writers who says that death is the loss of the spirit or the soul. What is the soul? It is all that we recollect, its essence and entirety. We dread death, not because we will lose the future, but the loss of the past. Death extracts our past from us. Forgetfulness is one type of death in life. Lo, I suffer from gaps in my memory, gaps that widen and broaden, as a mouth that opens slightly to express a smile, then broadens to become full of laughter. This gorgeous mouth, the mouth of oblivion began to swallow the past, swallow my years. It is similar to the mouth of a grave that gradually pulls me towards it, sucks me as a honeycomb, while I melt, vanish, my memory wanes and dies. I die while I breathe, eat and wash the dishes (1986A: p.42).

The character of Balqīs in *Matāhaht al-A'rāb fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb* is quite different from the characters of Maryam and Mrs. Murād. She is an oppressed, contradictory character. She is conventional in her attitude towards society, tries to comply with its rules and laws, but at the same time, suffers from an irreconcilable contradiction within her character. She confesses this contradiction to Ḥasanayn, when she accompanies him to the restaurant, on the assumption that he is a ghost and not a real man:

She said without turning her face to me: I don't know, I am unable to adjust in the world, or reunite with myself. I try to resort to Sufism, but I'm unable to. Ever since my husband had been murdered by his comrades in the West, when he was an ambassador, I feel myself lost and experience nightmares. I live in terror. My nerves are tense. Perhaps I am now an alcoholic. Imagine his comrades! Imagine, do you believe that I was a member of the party myself, too? He persuaded me to be (1986B: 73).

The other character who has some affinity to Maryam and Mrs. Murād is 'Ā'ishah, Jum'a's sister. She is a practical woman, a woman of experience and can make decisions. She knows details of life and its vocabulary very well (1990: p.152).

When Jum'a asks whether she needs any money from him, her response is decisive and firm:

I am in no need of your money. I am economically emancipated. My work earns me my bread. I can lend you some money, if you are in need. .... You think I am a weak, divorced woman in need of her brother's support and care, isn't it so? You are a deluded narrow-minded person ( al-Razzaz, 1990: 148).

'Ā'ishah is aware of the social oppression females suffer in the Arab World. This awareness makes her defiance greater and her stand firmer. Commenting on her ex-husband's behaviour, she says:

When he was a leftist, he forced me to follow in his footsteps, when he converted to Liberalism he expected me to convert, too. When he became a Nasserite he persuaded me to become so by force. He even connected my conversion to Nasserism with my marital constancy. The constant wife, he argued, does

not ideologically betray her husband. Then he tried to impose the veil on me when he returned to faith and went to work in the Gulf. .... She said she is sick of bondage ( al-Razzaz, 1990: 150-51).

There are many other female characters in al-Razzaz's novels, but their roles are minor and their depiction vague. There is, for instance, the character of Suzi, the Major's wife, who is cultured and appreciates poetry, having read French poets, dramatists and novelists. She chose to marry the Major, although she doesn't like his character and complains about his disgusting habits to 'Inād, yet she agrees to stay with her husband because he represents power (al-Razzaz, 1982: 20-21).

There is also the character of Dr. Murād's daughter who is meant to highlight the state of suffering and isolation which the whole family experienced. In one of her internal monologues, she sums up the family's situation under house arrest:

The day is bare of all events, the night is terrible, beautiful, full of dreams, dreams where real events happen, dreams inhabited by real persons, ancient cities and strange unique and dreadful dialogues. Daytime is void, night is packed, the day is ennui, night is excitement. Sleeping is the pivot of the only true events. All that I see outside sleep is but an illusion and a dream. The soldiers outside are ghosts, the walls that gag our house are a mirage, the sun outside is but a big lie ( al-Razzaz, 1986: 101-2).

The character of Jum'a al-Qafārī is somewhat different from the other protagonists, in the sense that he is an ordinary person who does not have special qualities that make him a distinguished character in his society. He

belongs to the middle class and has no social, political or ideological role to perform. Nevertheless, he is aware of his marginality in society and is greatly affected by it. His character is presented through three major methods: his memoirs, the omniscient narrator, and through the other characters' views. Like all the other characters of al-Razzaz's works, we know little about his physical appearance, apart from some minor references to his weak stature. Thus the main concentration is on his psychological formation. In introducing himself to the reader, Jum'a points out the value of his marginality in an ironic tone:

Yes, I am a mere uncelebrated individual, and what fault is there in being so? Can you enjoy yourself with such a blessing? Have you ever heard of Mishael al-Nimri? Mishael al-Nimri was not an uncelebrated individual, see what was his end. Lights, my dear. This bold young man wanted to change the world. He swooped the political arena, then journalism. My arch-friend, Kathīr al-Ghalabah, informed me that the late Mishael became the focus of lights, and that he had great ambitions, that is why they killed him. Who killed him? I do not know. . . . his name began to glisten, glistening attracts attention, and the attention drives people to observe the source of glistening; and whoever people put under observation, dies through murder.<sup>121</sup> ( Al-Razzaz, 1990: 9).

The character of Jum'a is an expression of the idle dreamer who hardly knows anything about life. Kathīr al-Ghalabah, his foil and close relative and

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<sup>121</sup> This is a rephrasing of the Arabic saying "Whoever observes people, dies through distress." In this case, the idea of being kept under surveillance is highlighted in political terms.

friend, points out his weaknesses. He does not know the prices of commodities, how to replace a burnt lamp, or even to buy one. He is an outsider in his own society. His obsession with writing a novel is partly an attempt to compensate for his inefficiency in life. But again his inability to act prevents him from performing this single act of his life.

## (B) Narrative Techniques:

Al-Razzaz employs different narrative techniques in his novels. His aim, it seems, is to match the content of each of his novels with an appropriate narrative technique that can best express the ideas he intends to convey. Thus we can differentiate between the novels in terms of technique in the light of the themes expressed in the work.

The fractured ego of the Arab intellectual, the absence of a separating line between reality and illusion, between waking and hallucination, and between reality and the nightmare, form the central thesis of his first three novels. The narrative techniques in these three works have many shared characteristics, although each one has its own distinct features.

### (1): *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit*:

The world of this novel is one of fragmented consciousness and insanity. To give expression to such a depiction, the author relegated the act of narration to one of the major characters in the work itself. This narrator,



however, is not the implied author as is usually the case with similar novels, but rather the editor of the memoirs of the implied narrator. This is why we find two voices participating in the narrative. Mithqāl, the editor, is also an active participant in the novel which his friend 'Inād originally wrote. But the ordering of events, the introduction and the conclusion play an important role in directing the reader towards the interpretation which the editor adopts. One of the narrative devices which al-Razzaz employs in this work is the self-conscious narrator. Through this device Mithqāl freely comments on what he is doing, while he is presenting the narrative. By this method, he manages to dissociate himself from the superior authorial voice which encloses the narration and pulls its strings in his hands. The introduction which appears in the first pages of the novel reveal such a trick:

These memoirs which I have decided to dispatch to the printers are written by my friend, 'Inād al-Shāhid who managed to express his ideas in states of practical, spiritual and psychological change, upheaval, incongruity and fickleness that can never end until his death, In my personal view, these memoirs may, or may not, form a novel. They follow the pattern of an autobiography, or of an anti-biography. Language within them seems contradictory, and the tempo of its rhythm is irregular. Faces merge within the work, separate, decompose and then reunite, only to splinter again. ( Al-Razzaz, 1982: p.5). The work appears fragmented, repetitive and hazy. It is meant to reflect the fragmented, perplexed and insecure Arab individual who finds no logic or reason to govern the attitude of politicians in his world. In such a situation, it is natural that the narrative should be of an introspective and subjective nature. The stream-of-consciousness technique is thus employed to reveal the most intimate and inner thoughts of the individual.

This breaking away from conventional forms that are dominant in the Arabic novel falls within the context of "giving expression to a world that paralyses the mind by its nightmarishness and strangeness" (Şālih, 1993: 80).

This introduction prepares the reader for the work in a scrupulous manner which the novel requires. Al-Razzaz remarks that he tried to portray in his novel,

the collapse of reality through the artistic structure. The inner sense of time and place changes by the movement from one place to another. .... This change affects not only political trends, but also the basis of the psychological makeup. This is why the question of time relates not only to the place, but extends to include the stand towards authority as well (quoted in 'Abd al-Khāliq, 1993: p.97).

## (2) *I'tirāfāt Kātim Şawt*:

The world of *I'tirāfāt Kātim Şawt* is one of stagnation, immobility, terror, paralysis, silence and death. It is the world of imprisonment, fear, impotence and frustration. The narrative technique in which the author has chosen to express such an atmosphere takes a semi-circular line where the end echoes the beginning, and the events are monotonous and gloomy. Right from the outset, the reader finds himself face to face with an appalling reality: the Doctor who was once the distinguished thinker of a party that came to power after a prolonged struggle, is himself suddenly under house arrest. This sudden unexpected event brings to mind Kafka's protagonist in *The Trial*, who wakes up one morning to find himself arrested without any comprehensible reason.

The incomprehensibility of this house arrest to Dr. Murād, his wife and daughter, has an affinity with Joseph K's case, and to some extent like the latter case, it is accepted without resistance. Nevertheless, the family cannot stop wondering about the reason for such a brutal decision, especially since it is taken by the General who was once so close to the Doctor. Dr. Murād comments on this situation:

The ugliest part of the tragedy is to be punished for an unknown guilt, a sin whose nature is unknown. Thus one would spend one's life wondering, guessing and analysing. In the end, one would wish the charge to be real to put an end to one's incessant perplexity, and rationalise paying the price for it. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986A: p.10).

Since no real events take place inside Dr. Murād's house, the movement of events turns retrospectively. Every character starts by recollecting the past and looking towards the future. Each individual character's thoughts and memories are presented separately to the reader. They are not communicated to the rest of the characters. To achieve this, al-Razzaz employs the shot technique where we are introduced to each character alone, while the character reveals his or her inner thoughts and recollections. There is little dialogue in the novel, apart from recollections of the past, and the brief scenes in the last part when the daughter is left alone with her cousin, Murād, in Amman. This absence of dialogue heightens the sense of isolation and repression that are dominant thematic features of the work.

The first-person narrator, "I" is thus the main source for the presentation of events. Nevertheless, the omniscient narrator is always there, reminding us of his presence by introducing the character whose "I" shifts the

point of view from one perspective to another. What is important to be noticed about the narrative technique in this work is the intention of the author to rally our sympathies towards his characters, by making them think aloud, rather than address themselves to the reader. This is evident in the case of Dr. Murād, his wife and his daughter who never hint at an audience, but their thoughts are presented to the reader through internal monologues.

Compared with these characters are the Lieutenant, the guards and Yūsuf, the bearer of the silent revolver. These characters are always presented through some other consciousness, not in their subjective thoughts. The reader is intended, one assumes, to observe them in a more objective perspective and look on their thoughts and actions with the eye of reason, not sympathy. When Doctor Murād's daughter thinks about her situation under house arrest, with cameras installed in the house to observe the family, we are introduced to her thoughts with the following monologue:

I travel in my fancy to the Amazon Forests, fly to California, move to 18th-Century Paris, to Marie-Antoinette. Like a mole, my imagination penetrates deeply into fields of time, passing through tunnels towards places where no one knows my real name. I wish I had the invisibility hat so that eyes may not see me. .... When I leave this bottle, I shall go to the Amazon Forests, I shall construct a great castle with lofty walls to hide behind. .... With the invisibility hat upon my head, I shall tour the world and see it, while I remain unseen.

The Lieutenant, who suspects that secret cameras are installed in his flat and car, has his views communicated to us by the omniscient narrator. He goes to his cousin, the Colonel, and asks to be allowed the use of one of his

flats so that he may make love to his own wife. All this is communicated to us by the third-person narrator. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986A: p.39).

The Colonel puffed, wiped the sweat with the back of his palm, and praised Allah. The Lieutenant looked at him in astonishment. The Colonel confirmed that he did not suffer from a similar problem. He said: You know, I am sexually impotent and a bachelor too. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986A: p.40).

Yūsuf's past history in the prison and his collapse and betrayal of his comrades are all passed to the reader through Dr. Murād's own recollection of that situation. At the end of that recollection, we have the omniscient narrator's voice comment:

The Doctor realised at that moment that this young man became a time-bomb. It may explode at any time. He may destroy and tear himself to pieces, and may destroy and tear others apart, too. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986A: p.89).

When the first-person narrator is employed with the character of Yūsuf, it is not to reveal his private thoughts in a subjective manner, but rather to heighten our disgust because it reveals Yūsuf's intrinsically negative qualities, together with the unfavourable social milieu in which he was brought up. The first-person "I" narrator in Yūsuf's case addresses an audience whom he accuses of lack of sympathy, before presenting his case. It looks like a defence presented on behalf of a defendant to a court martial whose verdict has already been declared:

I know, ladies and gentlemen, that you will never believe that I am moulded of your own clay, an ordinary man, a human being who loves and hates. I know you will frown, raise your eyebrows in astonishment and say: A proficient avaricious

murderer and a human being, too? That is incredible! .... I shrug my shoulders and curl up my lower lip every time I hear a view dissenting from mine. I don't care. Other peoples' views do not interest or concern me. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986A: p.51).

The novel is concluded by a direct dialogue between the implied author and an implied audience. This dialogue which questions the manner in which the novel ends and proposes other endings brings to mind the postmodernist techniques of narration where the reader is not only assumed to internalise what the author has externalised, but rather to participate in the very act of creation itself. As Linda Hutcheon observes in her discussion of the narcissistic narrative, "The reader is forced to face his responsibility toward the text, the world he is creating through the accumulation of literary language" (1984: p.27).

Nevertheless - and through this dialogue - the undemocratic nature of the world of the novel and the repressive atmosphere are confirmed. In Al-Razzaz's own words:

A summary of the rationalist dilemma confronting the regime of bullies in Arab history, the conflict between the power for change and the power of immutability which Adonis expressed in "The Static and The Dynamic". As a result of the increasing suppression between these two forces, a perversion seized the psyche of the static to the extent that human feelings diminished, and were replaced by the beast concealed within the human soul. (Quoted in 'Abd al-Khāliq, 1993: pp.98-99).

### *(3) Matāhah al-A'rāb fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb:*

The concepts of going astray and the deception of the senses are central to the novel *Matāhah al-A'rāb fī Nāṭiḥāt al-Sarāb* in terms of its title and content. The author employed several devices to give expression to these concepts in both form and technique. The episodic division of the novel creates a disconnected, anarchic form that insinuates to the reader the dominant climate of loss and bewilderment. Characters have more than one life and in some instances, as is the case with Ḥasanayn, they have more than one physical appearance. Each character narrates his or her life or some other person's life. Thus the narrative fluctuates between the first person and the omniscient narrators.

The novel begins in *medias res* with Ḥasanayn the scientist who lectures on the relationship between the techno-electronic age and the collective unconscious. This same character who believes in science is essentially superstitious and belongs to the dark ages. As his childhood story is revealed ( Al-Razzaz, 1986B: pp.23-29), we get to know more about his origins. He is like his city, Amman, as his grandfather says

it is a shelter to which the Sarcasians migrated from the Caucasus, the Palestinians from Palestine, and to which came some Damascenes, Armenians, *Durūz* and Bedouins. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986B: p.17).

The omniscient narrator presents the characters briefly, while the reader is left with the characters explaining their thoughts and experiences. This device sometimes places the reader in some difficulty in understanding the relationship between the speakers in the work. This difficulty is intensified through the fragmentation of the characters, particularly Ḥasanayn into more

than one character performing different roles sometimes simultaneously, at other times independently from each other.

A new device is also employed to increase the maze: a work of art within the work of art. This "Chinese-box" technique where we have a narrative within a narrative, an author attempting to formulate a work of art within a work of art performs in this novel a double function: In the first place, it provides an escape for the protagonist from a situation which in its cruelty may drive the character to contemplate a suicide. As a result of the state of frustration and despondency which he reaches, Ḥasanayn escapes to art as a resort from suicide:

I felt I have no other option but suicide. The dream has deserted me, the band repudiated me and the tribe uprooted me. Roles of heroism and the message forsook me; thus I lost the meaning and rationale for my existence. Yes, I have to create my dream, formulate my illusion, portray a heroism whose conditions are under my control and prepare its stage and events, so that no external objective or subjective circumstances may interfere and spoil my edifice. ( al-Razzaz, 1986B: pp.194-5).

The failure of this creation drives Ḥasanayn to contemplate suicide again. But then he is suddenly transported into a huge building in the desert where he is interrogated about his imaginary world, and where he is told by Shaharazad about the fate of his work.

Lack of chronology and the absence of logical order reveal the absurd situation, and the illogical status in the world of the novel, the multiple lives allotted to individuals reflect in their totality the suffering of individuals and their psychological fragmentation. Everybody clings to myths as a means of



salvation: the myth of progress, of science, of art and of reality. In response to The Expert's inquiry about how Ḥasanayn came to create his work, Ḥasanayn bluntly answers:

I was in need of a myth. All of us need myths. I yearned for a mythical hero, a band whose individuals are free from fanaticism. I wanted them to actualise my dream, to establish real institutions, to build the structures of a laic state, to formulate a new man. ( Al-Razzaz, 1986B: 27).

(4): *Jum'a al-Qafāri: Yawmiyyāt Nakirah:*

Since this novel takes the form of memoirs, it is natural that it should be a series of unrelated events, with the sole connection being the character of Jum'a himself. This also explains the use of the first-person narrator, "I" which narrates most of the novel.

The ordering of events does not follow a strict chronology, but moves from the point of Jum'a's return from treatment in Europe in two opposite directions: revealing his past experiences, and progressing forward towards the end.

The parallel story to Jum'a's is that of Nu'man and his adventures in Amman, a story which Jum'a plans to write. This "Chinese-box" technique functions as a means of expressing Jum'a al-Qafārī's inability to unite in his character the faculties of thought and action. This failure finds its expression in the inability to complete the story enclosed within the work. The omniscient narrator appears on some pages (pp.21, 71-82, 127-31, 145-6) which, in my

view, has no special significance and no justification. The novel also rushes to its end in a very simple summary which deprives the work of some of its potential artistic value ( al-Razzaz, 1990: pp.202-4).

Despite these shortcomings, *Jum'a al-Qafārī* remains one of the few works of contemporary Arabic literature whose focus is the ordinary Arab individual.

### III. Language:

One linguistic discourse dominates all al-Razzaz's novels during the period under study. Classical Arabic is the language employed in almost all situations. However, this discourse is more of a journalistic nature that comes close to the spoken dialect, although it maintains its refined level. In some dialogues, however, we come across local dialects that provide an easy way to identify the level and nationality of the speaker. For instance, In *I'tirāfāt Kātim Šawt*, we find the secretary whom Yūsuf meets before killing the journalist in the office using Egyptian dialect which reveals her nationality. Similarly, we come across men and women using local dialects in *Matāhaht al-A'rāb fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb* which reveals their educational level and way of thinking, in addition to the patrimonial classic Arabic. The different levels of linguistic discourse in this novel serve another thematic purpose. This stylistic feature is meant to corroborate the hypothesis that the modern Arab individual is fragmented between the past and the present. In some instances, we find a

highly decorative, flowery language which reveals the influence of patrimony on present thought. Ḥasanayn asks Um Sulaymān:

How can we transform Arab society from an emotional, imaginative, poetical and mythological one into a realistic, practical, rational and scientific one? (1986B: p.79).

When the doctor asks him why he is using in his speech *Fuṣḥā*, he remarks:

I am sorry, Doctor. This seems to be a schism. We must admit that we write and read in *Fuṣḥā* and speak the colloquial. This means we write in a language that we do not speak, and speak a language that we do not write (1986B: p.61).

This duplicity takes other forms of thought and expression. Present Arab thought, according to the protagonist, does not reflect present Arab reality:

Ever since the dawn of the modern Arab Renaissance, the Arab ego has been polarised by two different patterns: the ancient Arab Islamic pattern, and the modern European pattern. (1986B: p.289).

Commenting on the language of the novel, al-Razzaz says in an interview:

"I have realised through reading Jung on the collective memory and through my personal experience in Beirut how the latent feelings are released by the lightest contact. These feelings that are present in every Arab unconscious still control his conduct. I have used the language of patrimony to express the linguistic unconscious which is inherent not as an aesthetic value in *Matāha*, but to indicate the hegemony of the inheritance over the collective conscious, and the possibilities of these legacies

surfacing at any contingency.” (quoted in ‘Abd al-Khāliq, 1993: p.96) A third linguistic function which different levels of language perform is to heighten the state of confusion. The manipulation of different linguistic patterns, ranging from everyday language, the classical language of the press, to patrimonial reveal the incompatibility between idiom and expression, signifiers and signified. It also serves a thematic function, that is, to reveal the marginalisation of writing and reading and the centralisation of image language: “the language of the world will no longer be words, but images”, ( al-Razzaz, 1986B: 156).

In al-Razzaz’s works, dialogue appears very limited, and is used in certain situations to reveal the absence of communication, rather than its existence. This lack of communication highlights the absurd situation in which present-day Man finds himself. For instance, in *Jum’a al-Qafārī* there is this dialogue between Jum’a and a man in the park which displays such a state:

The Man (looking at me): You seem to be cut off from a tree.<sup>122</sup>

I (without looking at him): Sorry! I thought you were talking to a branch.

The Man (surprised): The branch of the tree?

I: That one which is thrown there. The tree may have dispensed with it as a tribe dispenses with an outcast.

The Man: Or maybe the gardener cut it off, or some naughty boy, or

I: The ash.

The Man (in astonishment): The ash!

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<sup>122</sup> The expression “*Maqtū’ min Shajarah*,” (Cut off from a tree) is used idiomatically to express a situation where one has no relatives or friends.

I: The ash of your cigarette is about to fall on your shirt.

The Man: Oh, yes. It's very cold, and I don't want to take my hands out of my pockets. It will automatically drop.

I: The branch?

The Man: No, the ash of the cigarette. (1990: pp.13-4).

A linguistic device which al-Razzaz employs in his novels is intertextuality which performs two functions: the first is an affirmation of the fragmented and shredded ego of the Arab individual, a theme emphasised in almost all of al-Razzaz's works.

This can be found in the enclosed Western and Arabic texts within his works, particularly in *Aḥia' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit* where Ideas and quotations from Faulkner (pp.34-5), Taysir Sbūl (pp.46-7, 52, 115-6, 150), Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats (150-52) form an integral part of the world of the novel itself. They mainly function as elucidation of the fragmented and splintered self of the Arab cultured individual. The second role which "intertextuality" performs is to express the confrontational nature and conflictual type of relationship that exists between different ideas that appear within the narrative discourse, without becoming homogeneously integrated into one single discourse, while at the same time do not cancel out each other. Such a function appears in the inclusion of ideas by Brezinski, al-Jabiri and myths in *Matāhah al-A'rāb fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb*, a work that consists of modern and ancient texts to the extent that makes it appear as pastiche.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Sasson Somekh's remark about the novels of Naguib Mahfouz during the seventies can be descriptive of al-Razzaz's works, particularly *Matāhah al-A'rāb fī Nāṭihāt al-Sarāb*: "The intertextuality involved in the reactivation of medieval stylistic features is ironic

Al-Razzaz employs puns and anagrams in his works to express certain ideological concepts, or critical views towards some beliefs. Names of characters in many of his novels stand as references to ideas, such as Inād (obstinacy) al-Shāhid (the witness), Murād (objective), Kathīr al-Ghalabah (poky), etc. Even most of the titles of his novels contain puns that are meant to highlight in the reader's mind certain ideas, such as *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit* where the Dead Sea can be taken as the real place or as a symbol of the Arab world; *I'tirāfāt Kātim Ṣawt* (*Confessions of a Silent Revolver*), or *Matāhah al-A'rāb fī Nāṭiḥāt al-Sarāb* (*The Maze of the Bedouins in Miragescrapers*) where we have the Arabic word *sarāb* very close in form to the word *saḥāb* (clouds) to the extent that many people misread the title of the novel at first sight to be (*The Maze of the Bedouins in Skyscrapers*).

Al-Razzaz's writing influenced many Jordanian writers, especially in his approach to the narrative, and one of the novelists who seem to have been influenced by al-Razzaz is the Jordanian novelist, Elias Farkouh whose work will be the subject of the following pages.

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rather than linear or naive, and above all, the overall structure and fictional mode of these novels is modern rather than traditional: the very idea of writing a pastiche text is itself derived from modern Western fiction. Finally, the language of these pastiche novels, although drawing on medieval texts, is interspersed with words, collocations, sentence structures, and connotations that are distinctly modern."

Sasson Somekh, *Genre and language in modern Arabic literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991) p.35.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## ELIAS FARKOUH:

### THE SHATTERED DEFEATED SOULS

Elias Farkouh<sup>124</sup> (1948-) began his literary career as a short story writer before writing his first novel.<sup>125</sup> The impact of Sbūl's work, *Anta*

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<sup>124</sup>Elias Farkouh's name is transliterated as "Ilyās Farkūh," (See "Note on Transliteration," p.9).

<sup>125</sup>Farkouh published five collections of short stories during the period 1978-1991. They are as follows:

*al-Ṣaf'ah (The Blow)*. Baghdad, Ministry of Culture and Information, 1978.

*Ṭuīūr Amman Tuḥalliḡ Munkhaḡiḡah (Birds of Amman Hover Low)*. Beirut, al-Mu'assah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1981.

*Iḡda wa- 'Ishrūn Ṭalḡah lil-Nabi (Twenty-one Shots for the Prophet)*. Beirut, al-Mu'assah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr (and) Amman, Dār al-Mahd, 1982.

*Man Yaḡruth al-Baḡr (Who Ploughs the Sea)*. Amman, Dār Manārāt lil-Nashr wal-Tawzi', 1986.

*Asrār Sā'at al-Raml (Mysteries of the Sandglass)*. Beirut, al-Mu'assah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1991.

*Mundh al-Yawm*, and al-Razzaz's work, *Aḥyā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit* can be easily traced on Farkouh's first novel, *Qāmāt al-Zabad* in terms of themes, narrative technique and language. The June 1967 defeat disillusioned many Arab intellectuals and revealed the discrepancy between adopted slogans by nationalist parties and the ideological theories that were current prior to the defeat, and between the practices and their outcome in real life after the defeat. It is interesting to note that all these three writers belong to the same generation which was enthused by the Arab Ba 'th Socialist Party and its national ideology. In fact, all of them joined the party and pinned their hopes on the role which it may perform in delivering political freedom, social justice and progress to the Arab world. The appalling defeat of 1967 and the subsequent events that took place in the area shattered their hopes and dispelled their illusions. Each of them tried to re-examine the facts and put his finger on the real causes of the defeat, each drawing his own conclusions that were complementary to those of the others.

Born to a Christian Arab family and educated at a Christian school, Christian theology and the Christian way of life strongly influenced Farkouh.<sup>126</sup> In addition, Western thought and literature formed an essential

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Farkouh produced a new novel in 1996, and which is considered as a second sequel to the novel under discussion here. Its title is *A'mīdat al-Ghubār* (Pillars of Dust), and the author plans to add a third work which would constitute a trilogy with the two already published. I have not included *Pillars of Dust* (1996) in this study because, chronologically, it falls outside its scope.

<sup>126</sup> Farkouh was born in 1948 in Amman and received his education at Les Freres school in Jerusalem where religious education was quite prominent.



part of his study, a tributary that enforced his nationalist views and countered any religious intolerance that may result from a strict religious upbringing. His joining a nationalist party dissociated him from any fundamentalism that may characterise individuals who are brought up in a narrow factional or religious milieu. In the light of this national and religious background, many of the views and ideas that permeate his literary works reflect his upbringing and education.

### *Qāmāt al-Zabad*<sup>127</sup> (*Statues of Foam*)

In his short stories as well as in his novel, *Qāmāt al-Zabad* Farkouh presents the political reality in the Arab world as it has been experienced by the characters. This reality is characterised by bitter disappointments and frustrations of individuals who in their quest for great achievements or in their expectations reached a peak of inflated hopes before the horrifying disaster struck. The title of the work, *Qāmāt al-Zabad* (Statues of Foam) reveals the lack of solid foundation for these seemingly great hopes and aspirations. The work narrates the experience of the Palestinian resistance movement during eight years following the defeat of 1967, and the disappointments of that experience and its tragic results. It is presented through several individuals

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<sup>127</sup>*Qāmāt al-Zabad*, Beirut, al-Mu'assah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1987. All subsequent references to this novel are documented within the text.

who come from Palestine, Jordan and Syria and whose meeting point is Lebanon where the civil war breaks out to unveil yet a more agonising experience of absurd death. The moment of concentration for the novel is the night when the Palestinian refugee camp of Tel al-Za 'tar falls to the Phalangist forces. The three characters, Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi, Khālīd al-Ṭayyib and Zāhir al-Nābulsi are to depart to Alexandria. From this point, the past, present and future of each character unfold, revealing the inner conflicts, external crises and the fate of each character.

One of the outstanding features of this work is its concern with the human individual's personal desires, hopes, fears, aspirations and thoughts, and the lesser concentration on the external political facts and events. In an attempt to free his narrative from excessive background material, the author employs a new device through which he relegates such information to references and footnotes, so that it may be read separately from the text. This device perhaps made the novel appear closer to three biographies of three individuals who have a common experience, while their lives reflect different approaches to that experience. Thus we find the beginning of the novel reflecting the point of their meeting and departure in both time and place:

In the beginning ... the city disappears in space behind three men and through time. They become close to safety, safe from bullets, in a world that has not been filled with corpses yet. The sky is clear, apart from patches of summer clouds. Their eyes droop with sleeplessness. A redness mixes with the whiteness of their eyes caused by the anxious watching overnight (p.9).

From this point in time and space, the characters begin to reveal their experiences in a sort of shuttle manner which introduces them to the reader. A

characteristic feature of the protagonists is the control that external forces have over their destinies. These forces with their apocalyptic coerciveness leave their imprint and influence on the fates of the characters, in a manner resembling the ancient Greek oracles.

Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi, the Syrian ex-officer, who fought in the Golan Heights and witnessed the defeat in June 1967, is controlled by the prophecy of the soothsayer who took Nadhīr's hand as a child and read the lines of his palm:

'I see you voyaging from one sea to another. Your feet shall never tread on earth,' .... was the prophecy. I remember it. Can I ever forget it? It rings within me, no matter how far I go (p.44).

Similarly, Khālīd al-Ṭayyīb, the Jordanian university student who comes from a middle-class family and who joined the Palestinian resistance after the battle of al-Karamah, is controlled by his father's view that he is a good-for-nothing, and the military trainer's view that he is always 'in-between' (p.96). Zāhīr al-Nābulṣī, the Palestinian student who leaves the West Bank for Beirut where he lives with his uncle Maṣṣūr (or Abu al-Ḥakam as he is known there) is not controlled by any *a priori* view or prophecy. Nevertheless, he is torn between two attitudes representing two opposed principles: his father's maxim, "The white penny is a blessing in unpleasant times," and his uncle's dictum, "You have to know the laws of life in order to control it" (p.72).

In their quest to escape their predetermined fates, the protagonists stumble straight into them. They follow illusory propositions that deceive them and those who trust them (p.107).

A second thematic feature of the work is its concern with the theme of defeat. The premise from which the novel sets out, and in fact on which the events are structured, is this theme of defeat, a chronicle of national and individual defeats, failure of adopted ideologies, failure of the Palestinian resistance movements, and ultimately the failure of individuals in achieving their own goals and ambitions. Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi fights on the Golan Heights and witnesses the 1967 defeat; his efforts to prevent the fall of Tel al-Za'tar camp are unsuccessful. As for his personal ambition to write a novel, his 'great personal project', he finds no luck in it either. This project of writing confronts the reader right from the beginning:

What about my novel? My novel that waits for me to complete, I am not sure whether I can complete it. The first notebooks are mere sketches that up till now design nothing (p.10).

This personal ambition preoccupies Nadhīr's mind for a long time as a means of giving expression to facts and events which cannot be expressed by other forms (p.114). It is a strong desire and reaches the point of obsession:

How strange! I suffer from an overwhelming desire to write, I crave for writing. These images which pass through my mind like a line, like red meteors in a violated sky, they come and go, shine then fall in space and dissolve. No, I must not let them melt. I must first pick them up in my palm, record them and let them vanish in their unkindliness exactly like myself. The sky might tell all this. No, I must tell it myself, as I told the story of injustice of the Golan battles in the novel. The notebooks which began a long time ago remain unfinished. I did not add a single letter to them. I added nothing new to my novel .... I postponed writing my novel and said to myself, this is a great experience which you must not give up

(pp.230-1).

Khālīd al-Ṭayyib's ambition to count for something in society, to have a value as an individual and a role, and to overcome his state of "in-betweenness" leads nowhere. As a warrior, he is unable to prove himself, nor is he able to prove himself as a thinker or even as a lover. He is all the time haunted by the memory of those who were able to take their decisions and go on to the end with their choice. They set examples which he cannot follow:

You know you are in the middle, and I ... I want you to jump with me to the other point, but you bind me and make me unable to leave. .... All options are mine (p.18).

Khālīd's final decision to commit suicide is a sort of redemption or purgation, directed towards himself, to emancipate himself from the state of "in-betweenness" where he is locked and which constitutes his ordeal. It is also an attempt on his part to identify with those he admired for their courage in taking hard decisions and in being able to bear the consequences of their choice. Just before committing suicide, Khālīd wonders:

Will Marwān be contented? Will Nadhīr be contented? Will Abu al-Ḥakam, Zāhir, my old man, the Madam and my mother be contented? (p.265).

*Qāmāt al-Zabad* is in one sense a scrutiny of defeated souls, the escapist individuals who strive to rationalise rather than to find the causes for their defeat. This is evident in the character of Khālīd al-Ṭayyib whose childhood experiences, his motivation for joining the Palestinian resistance, and his loss of confidence in the organisation which he joined in the wake of the civil war in September 1970 in Jordan (during which his friend and young

comrade, Marwān is killed), are all brought to the attention of the reader. Against this gloomy background, Khālīd's character is foregrounded, revealing a schism within his own psyche. This character, with his gloomy history, is transported to Beirut, carrying a broken heart and a shaky belief in the cause he is defending. It is not strange, therefore, that Khālīd attempts to rationalise, at least to convince himself, of action in an organisation whose political objectives are not clear-cut, and whose leaders are those who are concerned most with their survival. Honest people, such as Abu al-Ḥakam, a prominent figure in the organisation and the writer of the political commentary in the journal where both Khālīd and Nadhīr work, have no real place in the organisation. Abu al-Ḥakam finds himself removed from his office, both from the journal and from being a key figure in Beirut, because he does not top the wave, and act like those opportunists who seek their own safety. Khālīd al-Ṭayyib observes upon Abu al-Ḥakam's departure:

He left, leaving a question in suspense as a bell, a full, silent presence which I still remember, a smile that stuck to the memory, an issue of the magazine after which he was absent from the offices and from writing, absent from al-Fakhani Street, the sidewalks of Beirut, and the thresholds of the houses that are swept by rain, blood, sweat and probabilities. I wonder who will replace him in writing the political column? At that point, Marwān arrived and I ran away to the Madam (p.67).

Doubt and uncertainty permeate the whole work. Nothing is certain or concrete. Words are void of meaning, and heroism is nothing but an illusion. In this maze of doubt and uncertainty, the characters try to feel their way in life:

The fatal thing is in living the illusion, giving it control over our lives and allowing it to lead us through rugged, rough ways while believing it to be fields of clarity. What we lack is clarity (pp.72-3).

Nadhīr thinks about his future career as an instructor in party doctrine in Damascus, after being removed from his post as a military officer:

I burst into a fit of laughter as I never did before. .... The job is routine work. Hours of writing directives, clarifications for the directives, justifications for the clarifications, reasons for the clarifications, words, words, words. Meanings slide on words and vanish.... Words get dry on paper, exhaust the memory of dictionaries (pp.43-4).

Land, which is assumed to be a safe place when compared with sea, becomes shaky and unstable and water becomes more solid and settled, and the sea becomes the lifebuoy (p.44). Nothing is certain to any of the characters. For Khālīd al-Ṭayyib,

Doubt pervades his heart and pulls his memories. He ruminates on his readings, God is not seated on his throne above the clouds. He is uncertain, leaves himself tempted by looting (p.65).

The characters have learned nothing out of their experiences nor have they acquired anything. Nadhīr al-Ḥalabī meditates on the outcome of his experiences:

I am the hero who is running to his disappointment, rushing to his blood. Therefore, I am not a hero. .... Welcome, welcome oh defeated face in the time of easy victories (p.113).

Khālīd al-Ṭayyib, likewise, concludes that he is nothing more than a big billygoat, butting the dust of his own hoofs, writing imagined victories, and goes on to say:

I have achieved nothing. I look back to the faces that were with me, and who are no longer with me and they say this is true. I break the silence of the moment and cry in the eroding erosion, Who of you achieved anything? No one. I realize that I am a billygoat who learned nothing from his mate. This is my sole certainty (pp.67-8).

It is natural that under such gloomy circumstances where there is no real hope, no certainties, no real comfort, a sense of scepticism and pessimism dominates and characterises the way the characters think. Nadhīr al-Ḥalabī remarks:

Some people criticise my pessimism. To them I say, where is the joy? We no sooner begin than relapse. We stand on our feet only to face a much more bitter and harder fall than the previous one. We run after a hope which we perceive, almost catch it, only to discover that it is the Ischariot who sold his master for twelve silver pieces. Every time we come to believe that we are approaching the shore, we find ourselves deep in the sea of darkness (pp.137-8).

A similar pessimism is expressed by Khālīd al-Ṭayyib: "I missed the train, time, friends and comrades. I missed Marwān there, too, and remained in my isolation, armless and alone" (p.181).

*Qāmāt al-Zabad* is the story of vanquished souls, desperate human beings who, in their quest for the liberation of their own selves from the shackles of bitter realities, escape to dreams and ideals. Surrounded by



uncertainties, collapsed ideals, defeat and gloomy prospects for the future, they relapse into selfish ambitions that may achieve their own egoistic goals, or in some instances, they follow personal ambitions of self-fulfilment through some constructive projects of writing. Nevertheless, the outcome of their struggle is tragically disastrous. In a world that is governed by forces of defeat and failure, the protagonists find nothing to fall back upon. They end tragically defeated both in their personal and public ambitions. The absurdity and gratuitousness of the world in which the characters live and the fate which they face is painfully portrayed in the incomplete word of egoism<sup>128</sup> with which the novel ends. Nadhīr is slain by people who share with him the belief in the cross, Khālīd commits suicide, Marwān is shot by people who share his religious belief, and Abu al-Ḥakam is removed from his post by his own comrades, a symbol of death. Zāhir al-Nābulī is the only character whose ultimate destiny is not shown to us. The silence on the author's part regarding Zāhir's future leaves all possibilities open. Nevertheless, in a climate of defeat and failure, and in the absence of any indicators of change, prospects for a better future for Zāhir remain removed and unforeseen. As Mūdī Bīṭār Sam'ān notes,

In his first novel, *Qāmāt al-Zabad*, Farkouh celebrates in an elegy the Arab homeland and people both collectively and

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<sup>128</sup>As Khalid commits suicide, he utters one word repeatedly, that is, "I, I". an expression of an incomplete sentence which he meant to utter.

individually. He narrates a story of siege, disappointment and dispersion, and writes the end before the beginning<sup>129</sup>

### (1). Characterisation and Narrative Techniques:

*Qāmāt al-Zabad* narrates the story of the Arab situation during the sixties and seventies through a particular example, that is, the Palestinian resistance movement. This example is further particularised through the experiences of several individuals who belong to several Arab countries, so that when the whole experience is put together, the general scene is easily detected and comprehended. The focus of the novel is shifted from the general to the particular, and is further turned from the external to the internal world. The three personal lives of the three protagonists form not three parallel lines, but rather three curved lines forming an equilateral triangle which represents the three perspectives of the world of the novel. The novel is divided into three main sections: Faces of Foam , Standing Waves and The Last Time. This division, however, does not reflect a chronological order, but an order that moves within a closed circle with its beginning touching its end. It is at that meeting point of collision in time where the novel begins, moving the reader between these points of beginning and end. This proposition is almost explicitly stated in the opening lines of the novel:

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<sup>129</sup>Mūdī Bīṭār Sam'ān, "Riwāyah Elias Farkouh *Qāmāt al-Zabad*: al-Inkisār wal-Hazīmah," in *al-Nāqīd*, No. 5 (November 1988) p.56.

Once upon a time, there was a tale whose end comes before its beginning, its beginning comes after its end. Its protagonists enter after their death, and leave before their birth (p.7).

The novel takes as its starting point in time the arrival of the ship Marwān to the port of Sidon where the three protagonists are supposed to board on their way to Alexandria. Zāhir al-Nābulsi leaves to sit for his university examinations, as Beirut becomes a battlefield for various factions, an unsuitable place for the examinations, and Alexandria, the city and university, consent to be the substitute for Beirut and its university (p.10). Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi is also about to board the ship on a mission to Egypt, when a sudden telegram arrives changing his mission there for another one in East Beirut. Khālīd al-Ṭayyib, on the other hand, leaves for Alexandria on board the ship not on a mission, but on vacation. This is their point of meeting and parting in both time and place in the novel, and the rest of the work is an exploration of their psyches, a revelation of their intimate thoughts, memories and fate. Through the recollections, thoughts and fates of the protagonists, the events that took place in the area unfold, bringing to light the general scene as viewed by the characters individually. The real and the imaginary time combine forming a vision of the future. As Nabīl Ḥaddād points out,

The imaginary time of the novel differs from the real time or the actual time of the events. Nevertheless, the author plays the game of unilaterality and categoricity of time through the

employment of the flashback technique, recollection and association<sup>130</sup>

As part of his experimentation, Farkouh employs a dual discourse in his novel to express two different levels of awareness within the world of his work. The first one is the journalistic discourse which provides the reader with background information about the political and social situation surrounding the novel. Such information is necessary for the comprehension of the general climate of events. This discourse is relegated to footnotes that appear in different places in the work,<sup>131</sup> and give insights to the reader and help in analysing and understanding the characters thoroughly. To distinguish between the two discourses, the journalistic one is written in italics, a device which had been employed by other novelists, such as Faulkner, Joyce and ḠḤasan Kanafani. However, there is a basic difference between Farkouh's employment of italics and that by the other novelists. Unlike Faulkner, Joyce and Kanafani who use this device to differentiate between different levels of

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<sup>130</sup> Nabil Ḥaddād, "al-Riwāyah fī al-Urdun fī al-Thamānīnat: Dirāsah fī al-Bī'ah," in *Dirāsāt Jāmi'at al-Yarmūk* (1989) p.91.

<sup>131</sup> The first footnote appears on page 26 and extends over nine pages. It shows the negative social impact of armed young men on family values and morals in Lebanon where force replaces reason. The second footnote appears on page 70 and extends to page 76. This footnote introduces to the reader Zāhir al-Nābulsi's notebooks that give personal and family views that may be current in the West Bank. The third footnote (pp.88-94) gives information about the battle of al-Karamah which took place on the 21st of March 1968 between the Israeli army on the one hand, and between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian resistance movement on the other, and the subsequent upsurge of national feelings. It is meant as a background information for Khalid al-Ṭayyib's joining the Palestinian resistance movement. The final footnote (pp.222-6) describes the civil war in Jordan in September 1970 and the subsequent departure of the Palestinian resistance movement from Jordan to Lebanon.

consciousness, recollection and present events, Farkouh employs italics to help the reader distinguish between two different discourses that appear contiguously on the same page. Another difference between Farkouh's device and the other novelists who employ italics pertains to the function which this device performs. For Faulkner, Joyce and Kanafani, the italics are meant to help the reader to realise the shifts in time and place: the movement from the present to the past, from the external world of the novel to the inner world of the characters. Farkouh, on the other hand, directs the whole italicised discourse to the reader from an anonymous narrator, totally isolating the characters from any awareness of such information communication. It is, in other words, a sort of background information meant to build up the reader's feedback concerning the actions and thoughts of the characters who are not supposed to be aware of the narrator's revelation of facts and his reporting to the reader. The author directs the reader to the manner in which footnotes are meant to be read. In a reference note, the author says:

Footnotes that are written in italics are meant to be read as complete texts at their occurrence, then the chapter of the novel can be read on its own (p.10)

In the second footnote, there is an affinity with Mu'nis al-Razzāz's work, *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit* where the narrator, who is one of the characters of the novel, comments on 'Inād al-Shāhid's notebooks that form the novel. In a manner reminiscent of what al-Razzāz's narrator does, we find an anonymous narrator commenting on Zāhir al-Nābulsi's notebooks in Farkouh's novel:

Any careful examiner of these notebooks will immediately note that the writer planned no autobiography or the production of

any literary prose work. The six notebooks on the whole contain a chaotic and confused mixture of impressions and memories of persons whom Zāhir knew, as members of his family, or events which he himself had experienced. .... The selected parts explain and clarify some ambiguities, and shed light on details that constitute the event (pp.70-1).

The second discourse which Farkouh employs in his work is the literary one which presents the characters, their thoughts and their actions.

#### *(A). Narrative Techniques*

In his novel, *Qāmāt al-Zabad*, Farkouh employs different narrative techniques in order to construct a poetical and a narrative structure. The anonymous narrator, who reports background information in footnotes, is perhaps the same omniscient narrator whom the reader comes across in the literary discourse and whose function is to make comments on situations, provide remarks and explanations for some actions of the characters, as well as describe some scenes. In some instances, the omniscient narrator takes over the responsibility of revealing the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. For instance, when Khālīd al-Ṭayyīb examines the painting on the wall of his room in the hotel, his thoughts, feelings and impressions are communicated to the reader through the omniscient narrator's words and eyes:

He gazes at the forehead for a short while, examines the features of the face. He sees in her that woman whom he desires and yearns to hold in his arms, to feel the brazen body on his fingers, to sweat his body on the heat of her shoulders. She does not have the roundness of these fleshy shoulders that stand

before him. Nevertheless, and in spite of the fragility of her stature, she incites an agonising fire in his veins, similar to the pain he experiences now in his eyes: close and remote, within the reach of his hands and away from quenching the urging desire. She is Thurayyah, Nadhīr Bin Bāsīl al-Ḥalabī's woman, his woman as well as the woman who sits for the pleasure of the customers of the bar; yet never for Khālīd, never for him. He is the Madam's wavering man who remains in the point of 'in-between'. He flies from the Madam who accepted him, in spite of his stumbling inclination to Thurayyah who runs away from him, she who stands the villainies of the customers in the bar, in spite of his closeness to her man who is his friend and comrade. Yet, he does not understand. She herself told him that while his eyes were devouring her little breasts that were exposed to glowing eyes in the darkness of the pub, the red-painted darkness brewing with the noise of Egyptian and Lebanese songs rising from the G-box. .... In the bottom end of the painting, he read, *Banāt Bahrī*, Maḥmūd Sa'īd, 1937 (pp.117-8).

When Khālīd al-Ṭayyib recollects the memories of Beirut and the Madam, the omniscient narrator explains Khālīd's feelings and comments:

The days elapsed like the beads of a rosary, bead after bead. The sands of Beirut slipped finely and smoothly, melting in the Madam's fingers. He kisses them one by one, absorbing the pleasure of the absence of salt from the fingers, treasuring the pleasure of the first taste, the unique, special taste which once permeated his system, never to leave it again. He knew not that every time he attempted to recall, it vanished into an unapproachable depth. He started searching for that which he cannot get hold of, seeking it in her limbs and depths, ready for the alternative in every meeting, before and after every meeting, but that thing was not there, and the Madam was ready for what

complements her. Because he could not get hold of that which he did not hold, Beirut remained withheld from him, as well as the Madam. He embraces her, she runs to him, inside him, while Beirut remains remote. He releases her, leaving a distance between them. It seems more credible and closer to reality. Nevertheless, he does not dare, and the gap remains. The old man's statement strikes him: You are good-for-nothing ... He wonders whether this also applies to his relationship with the Madam, too (p.126).

Similarly, when Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi stands on the shores of Beirut, we have the omniscient narrator describe the external view as an observer and<sup>1</sup> reveal a hint of what flashes in Nadhīr's mind:

He hit the iron bars that walled the sea in Beirut with his hands, a small wave emerged on the sands of the seashore under his feet where he stood. It quickly melted in the milky foam, vanished in the salty earth where salt melts in salt on the sand of salt. ... The prophecy flashes and thunders: from sea to sea (p.52).

The omniscient narrator also describes early morning actions of Khālid al-Ṭayyib in Alexandria, before he leaves for Cairo where he intends to meet Thurayyah, Nadhīr's woman. All his recollections, thoughts and actions are presented by the omniscient narrator (pp.174-7), together with general observations that reveal the inner conflict within characters:

Nothing like the memory that painfully strikes the heart, haunts the mind, distances it, and annuls everything except itself. A blow that descends like a desire from its height on the whole body, scratches the stagnation, a memory and a desire, a longing and a craving. All the possibilities and yet impossible. A strange binarism storms tempestuously within Khālid al-Ṭayyib (p.180).



Side by side with the third-person omniscient narrator, Farkouh employs the first-person singular narrator in reporting personal experiences of the characters. Recollected memories of the past are presented in a personalised, subjective manner, a method for heightening the immediacy and acuteness of the experience. Khālid al-Ṭayyib's ordeal, his experiences in Amman and Beirut, and his own weaknesses are all reported in his own voice. Through his own words, we come to know his hopes, ambitions, desires, suffering, and encounters. Observations about characters are also presented through the eyes of other characters to complement the portrait depicted subjectively. This method of characterisation applies to the depiction of almost all the characters of the novel. For example, Khālid al-Ṭayyib frequently presents himself in the following way:

I am Khālid al-Ṭayyib, son to respectable parents. According to my birth certificate and passport, my father's name is---no, no use in mentioning his name. I have captured the moment to say that thing whose nature is impossible for me to know. It is my day, and I shall go on with it. Nothing is left. It is the last drop in the pot of experience. Yes, the experience. This is what I call it. Is it just an experience? I shall not philosophise nor detail matters. My head is the warehouse for the remains of the world. My heart is empty. The world has collapsed, but I will survive. Whoever says otherwise is an ignorant idiot and a fool. Beirut means naught to my dreams more than the horizon. From now on, there is no addition, a repetition of the book from the first to the last pages. If I begin from the middle pages of the middle chapter of the book, there is no harm. No additions from now on, a monotony, just like myself, or as though monotony itself is myself. It makes no difference. Nevertheless, I will survive. When did this begin? Not today, nor yesterday. Perhaps a

month ago or more, perhaps deeper in time. Have I reached the end of the horizon to escape really from its abysmal edge? Men are no longer men. The city no longer deserves dreams. The old stars vanished without being replaced in the sky by new ones (pp.262-3).

This type of monologue occurs several times in the novel. The reoccurrence of such passages reveals a sort of circularity in the structure of the work, connecting its beginning to its end. This feature is easily detected all through the novel, particularly when the situation pertains to the inner thoughts of characters. For instance, the identity of words with which different situations begin emphasises the idea of circularity. Khālid al-Ṭayyib says, for example, "nothing rises above my head but the sky," on several occasions and in several geographical sites (pp.61, 82, 217). This expression reveals a sense of megalomania that the character of Khālid suffers from. However, this sense of greatness gradually softens and gives way to the more realistic view of himself which he acquires through the viewpoints expressed by other characters of him. Abu al-Ḥakam sees in Khālid a person who "goes around the deed, stares at it, yearns for performing it, but never does it. There is a flaw in his character, lack of freedom and lack of awareness" (p.200).

The officer who trains Khālid in the camp detects a very serious flaw which is tantamount to a tragic flaw:

"You are 'in-between'" (p.96).

The Madam, a rich widow with whom Khālid makes love, without being able to develop his relationship to an acceptable level of mutual understanding, says in amazement:

I wonder how you choose your items. They all look the same  
They all come from the same world, as if the world were a book  
in which little parts of you are collected. Don't you see? ... A  
woman isolated in the darkness which is not darkness,  
submerged in a darkness that is much less dark than the 'in-  
betweenness'. Yes, it is the state of 'in-betweenness'  
(pp.187-8).

Khālid ultimately realises his real picture, not as he wished it to be, nor as he previously viewed himself, but his real, true image which has been drawn by the other characters:

I understood that I waver between her and the Madam, and  
between them both I lose myself. I could not win Thurayyah,  
nor keep possession of the Madam inside me. .... Here again I  
am in the state of 'in-betweenness', ... I am always in the 'in-  
between', between books and the burning deed, between flight  
and confrontation, between my shame and the old man's  
sentence, You are good-for-nothing, between the impossible  
love and the hard love, between treason and faithfulness. The  
officer frankly said it. Eight years ago he said it. He hesitated,  
but he said it. I recall his words very well: No one knows how  
you will turn out to be, comrade. It was not only the officer, but  
it was exercised on me as a punishment, seven years ago at the  
time of the great fire. .... The Madam also discovered this state  
of 'in-betweenness', this accursed damnation. .... The Madam  
told me that the 'in-between' quality sticks to me. I could not  
bear it. She was, as though, putting her finger in the wound  
(p.219).

By attaining this realisation, Khālīd al-Ṭayyīb reaches the stage of confrontation with his own self, a confrontation where there is no place for pretence.

A third narrative voice which appears in *Qāmāt al-Zabad* is the second person, "you", which is, perhaps, an expression of the fractured psyche, a symbol of the schism from which the characters suffer. Such a narrative voice can only be understood as a sort of an internal monologue or a reasoning with oneself by oneself. The second person narrative voice can be traced in two major characters of the novel. For example, when Nadhīr embarks on his final mission to East Beirut in an attempt to help prevent the fall of Tel al-Za'tar Palestinian camp, we are confronted by this argument between Nadhīr and himself:

He asks himself, where has your bitter smile gone, Nadhīr bin Bāsīl, your mocking soul of things and places? Have you lost it in the Western side? Or have you taken it off there, to confront that which requires more than your sarcasm and irony? You do not know, you do not know even the voice that blew within you, asking you to take your decision, to put your head in the mouths of wolves or tigers? Fear not. What is important is the good heart. My mother's amulet, her hearty pleading, dreaming of the heavenly throne to hear it and deliver me. He who is on his throne delivered me, oh mother. He delivered me, but I see in my descent a dark, bottomless pit (p.213).

Similarly, when Khālīd al-Ṭayyīb contemplates his final decision to commit suicide, he argues with himself:

You end me through your perpetual hesitation, your fear of departing from the middle point. Do you know? ... You are in

the middle, and I, I want you to jump with me to another point. You chain me, I cannot depart. You and I are in the same time and place, but we are not one. You must be convinced (pp.263-4).

This medley of narrative voices enables Farkouh to move easily with his narrative in the external and inner worlds of his characters. The omniscient narrator, the first-person and the second person narrators. Other narrative devices which Farkouh employs in this novel are the stream-of-consciousness, the flashback, the montage, the dream and the recollection techniques. The whole novel is in one sense a novel of recollection. All the events are presented in retrospection, apart from the fates of the characters. There is also the memoirs technique which is basically employed in presenting the character of Zāhir. In fact, most of the details about Zāhir are presented in the form of excerpts from his six notebooks. However, Zāhir al-Nābulsi's character could be viewed as a sort of background character whose role is to highlight aspects of other characters or foreground them, and in particular his uncle Maṣṣūr, or Abu al-Ḥakam.

### *(B) Characterisation*

Since *Qāmāt al-Zabad* follows an experimental trend in its form, the method of characterisation is directed inwardly. The novel focuses more on the thoughts and experiences of the characters than on their external appearances. The two major characters in this work are Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi and Khālid al-Ṭayyib, while all the other male and female characters are background ones whose main function is to foreground aspects of the characters of these two

protagonists and clarify them. The character of Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi is an example of righteousness in terms of ideology. He is an idealist, striving to achieve national and personal goals through being true-to-himself and to his principles. Introducing himself to the reader, Nadhīr says:

This is my name, Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi. My real and pseudonym. I have no double face nor two personalities. I am Nadhīr who never changes to match the seasons, the person whom Thurayyah knows so well, as her knowledge that Khālīd al-Ṭayyib desires her sexually. Nevertheless, she does not say that she knows this. She doesn't know that I know it, since I decline to say it. We both do not say what we know, and both of us formulate our world which we conceal from Khālīd al-Ṭayyib's face. He is not Ṭayyib<sup>132</sup> at all. I am Nadhīr the son of Basil al-Ḥalabi who changes not to suit the wave that rises in order to top it, so that I may survive and profit. I am myself and the current is the current, whether it is for or against me, it makes no difference to me. My stance is unshakeable like God, like my name that changes not with climates. I know no tactics. I abhor them. That is why people say that I am an idealist idiot (p.104).

Nadhīr's character is a typical saintly one whose desire to become a new national saint reaches religious heights through the risky undertaking in East Beirut, the stronghold of the Christian Lebanese forces who were at that time fighting against the Palestinians and their allies. The perspective from which Nadhīr approaches his national ambitions is a religious one. He strives

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<sup>132</sup>The word 'Ṭayyib' which represents the surname for Khalid means 'good-hearted'. In this context, Nadhīr is alluding to the contradiction between Khalid's surname and his actual nature.

to emulate the example of St. George impressed on his memory since childhood. Nadhīr's description of the icon which he saw in the church when he was a child reveals, as Fakhrī Šālih points out, the describer's desire to be the described, that is, Nadhīr's desire to replace St. George through an unconscious substitution<sup>133</sup>

The saint on his white horses saddle appears, while the dragon curls under the sturdy hoofs of the horse, with its red mouth open to the stabs of the spear that skilfully penetrates it. .... The saint with a clear, smiling face fights, as though he is in a dream. The horse seems larger than the dragon and the winged dragon appears doomed to be defeated, yielding submissively to its fate. .... St. George, with his dreamy face and his raised hand that carries a spear crowned by a small cross, smiles at me (p.168).

Nadhīr's desire for metempsychosis of St. George evokes yet a more profound desire, that is, to become a new Christ. The manner by which Nadhīr is killed at the hands of the Christian forces strikes an unmistakable parallelism to Christ's crucifixion. Other characters find out this Christly trait in him, and he himself realises it:

They point at me when they see me with her {Thurayyah} and say, here is Christ infatuated with the Magdalene. I frustrate

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<sup>133</sup>Fakhrī Šālih 'Qāmāt al-Zabad: an al-Hurūb Min Tajrubah Siyāsiyyah Ghamiḍah,' in *al-Ufuq*, no. 208 (August 1988) p.40. This article was republished in *Mawāqif* No. 70-1 (Winter/Spring 1993) 176-8,8 under the title "al-Khiṭāb al-Riw'āyi fī al-Urdun: Numūdhaj Ḥadāthah,". The ideas included in this article reappear in Fakhrī Šālih's book, *Wahm al-Bidāiāt: al-Khiṭāb al-Riwā'i fī al-Urdun* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1993), pp.109-22.

them by not saying, who of you is without a sin to throw a stone on her first (p.104).

Nadhīr's character is also influenced by the fortune-tellers prophecy that he shall never settle down on land, and remain travelling from one sea to another. This prophecy haunts him all the time wherever he goes:

The cry rings noisily within his head with the same vehemence,  
discomforting his sleep wherever he is. You shall never tread  
on land, and he remains torn between illusion and delusion.  
Travelling from sea to sea, he says to himself. I scattered my  
dreams on tables and drank them bitterly with coffee cups  
(p.145).

His national and his personal ambitions remain unfulfilled. His desire to achieve a victory, or at least a salvation from perdition for his people does not come true. Nor does his personal desire to write a novel bear fruit. He realises the insincerity of the leaders, the absurdity of his endeavours and the loss of his objectives. Nevertheless, he does not recant, but carries out his mission without any consideration to its tragic end:

I took the risk and gambled for a cosy corner and for a waist,  
for a cause whose protectors are its robbers (p.145).

In spite of his saintly outlook, Nadhīr remains a true human being who has his own weaknesses. His infatuation with Thurayyah, the Egyptian barmaid whose job is to entertain customers and meet their desires. Yet he feels strongly attached to her, despite his knowledge that she is not a chaste woman. She is to him a delicious woman from the strain of the forbidden fruit, the apple that expels from Paradise, the temptation on a mount that is not called Mount of Temptation and the mirrors that reflect the divided city where he lives (p.170). Just before his death, Nadhīr recollects Christ's crucifixion



and resurrection, his mother's teaching, his father's words, the cross which his mother gave him as a present on his twentieth birthday and which he had in its golden chain around his neck, Abu al-Ḥakam in his exile and Thurayyah who left for her country (pp.247-50). It seems that this moment concentrates and condenses all the significant characters and events that influenced Nadhīr's life. Thurayyah is no less important to him than his own life. Just before he dies from the wounds inflicted upon him by the Christian forces, Nadhīr thinks of Thurayyah:

I know that Thurayyah is present, in spite of death. She penetrates dark time, knives and places that are by the virtue of their being fixed, and in my blood. She comes to me gradually, tears away veils of darkness that surround me. She calls me, asks me to stop and wait for her to join me. I feel both happy and sad (p.258).

His death is in one sense a fulfilment for his desire to emulate Christ's example. Khālid al-Ṭayyib remarks after hearing about Nadhīr's death:

I always thought you were preparing yourself to perform the role of a martyr, another Christ. Bravo! Take my word, your success is absolute. I could clearly see it in the face of the enthusiastic student (p.261).

Compared with Nadhīr's committed and saintly character, Khālid al-Ṭayyib figures as an undetermined, hesitant, suspicious character. He is the product of circumstances which shaped his cowardice, hesitation and uncertainty. As a member of a Bourgeois family, Khālid acquires values of the market: opportunism, cowardice and the dread of adventure, the ability to rationalise unfaithfulness to a cause. Unlike Nadhīr whose beliefs prompt him to action, Khālid's beliefs provide additional reasons for passivity and a

motivation for escapism. His father was quick to recognise his son's qualities. As Khālid decides to join the Palestinian resistance movement in an upsurge of national feelings, his father says,

I can see what's coming. you are of no use. ....Will you run away from there at the right time? (p.24).

This estimation of Khālid's character from his father prognosticates the type of personality one would expect from Khālid to be, and poses a question about his ability to take the right decision at the right time, even if that decision in itself is an act of cowardice. Equipped with education, Khālid finds it easy to argue his case and raise doubts about the value of action. He puts on the mask of a pragmatist who pours contempt on those who stick to ideals and who in the unforthcoming circumstances attempt to take steps towards the achievement of their goals. Thus he fosters his loyalty to none but his own desires and well-being. To Khālid al-Ṭayyib, Abu al-Ḥakam, the revolutionary leader who as an idealist attempted to lead a stream within the mainstream of the revolution (p.105), is nothing more than a "Sisyphus" whose attempts to raise his rock to the summit are doomed to failure (pp.64-5). Similarly, Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi's self-sacrifice makes of him to Khālid "a mere joker" in a show that had neither spectators nor actors (p.261). But beneath this apparent pragmatism and indifference towards these roles which characters like Nadhīr and Abu al-Ḥakam perform, his sense of inferiority towards them lurks in an unmitigated bitterness directed towards himself and his incapacity. Deep within, Khālid al-Ṭayyib desires to imitate, if not to be, Nadhīr and Abu al-Ḥakam. His mask of vanity falls and gives way to an indignation and antagonism towards his other self. The discovery of his flaw defeats his

assumed pragmatism and makes him more vulnerable to his own criticism. The agonising events which he witnesses such as the death of his comrade Marwān, the disappearance of Abu al-Ḥakam and the tragic death of his comrade Nadhīr spur him to depart from the middle point, the 'in-between' state, or the state of hesitation. Khālīd al-Ṭayyib strives to emulate Nadhīr's example. He attempts to seduce Thurayyah, Nadhīr's mistress, in his quest to be identified with him. Khālīd's desire to possess Thurayyah, as Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ says, is "a means of imitating and empathising with Nadhīr" (1993: p.122). This becomes evident after he receives the news of Nadhīr's death. His original plan to live in Cairo, so that he can meet Thurayyah and have sex with her changes after Nadhīr's death. The removal of the physical obstacle from his way to Thurayyah, causes his sexual desire of her to decline. Instead of pursuing his initial goal, he chooses to commit suicide, an action that brings him closer to the example he wanted to imitate. Thurayyah as a desired sexual object that haunted him all the time and spurred him to leave Beirut for Egypt no longer troubles him. He conquers his hesitation and overcomes his other part. The choice which he ultimately makes, however, is not the revolutionary one. It is a negative, destructive choice. It is not an act of "purgation" (Ṣāliḥ, 1993, 122), but rather a destructive unredemptive choice, analogous to Judas's decision after selling his master for twelve silver coins. Khālīd himself draws a contrast between his state and that of Marwān, and by implication, between his state and that of Nadhīr:

I now remember something which I once read. I read it now in the empty space between us. I read it. He said to me through the distance that differentiates between his state and mine, although

we were born in the same way, death has more than one way.

This makes our choices

(p.33).

What Khālīd al-Ṭayyib ultimately recognises is the veracity of his father's verdict. Khālīd is of "no value" and "good-for-nothing"; his death or his life makes no difference, nor does his presence or absence add to, or subtract from, the value of things or the impact of events. In an internal monologue, Khālīd al-Ṭayyib draws the difference between himself and his other comrades:

I stand between your bullets and your fall, between your descent and your crash. I who remain between things, expecting neither death nor life, and neither of them accepts me. I am the present and the absent, you who are away are always present. I always see you within me, in time and place, in the breathing and storming of the sea. I hear you in its deep, endless roar. I feel you raise and throw me down in a sequence like its endless rise and fall (pp.242-3).

Our repulsion towards Khālīd al-Ṭayyib is somehow ameliorated through his acknowledgement of his own weaknesses and defects. This acknowledgement wins our pity, though not our sympathy with this character.

The method of narration in *Qāmāt al-Zabad* seems to be flawed. The novel begins with an anonymous, omniscient narrator who does not seem to grasp the essence of the narrative. One assumes that his role is to give guidance for the way the work is to be read, and present references to the events that form the background to the narrative (pp.7-8). This is followed by the introduction of the characters through their own consciousness, and in the

presence of the anonymous narrator who refers to the characters with their names or the third-person singular pronoun "he" (pp.10-16). The novel then proceeds all through its three parts presented from the perspective of Khālīd and Nadhīr's consciousness, while the omniscient narrator punctuates the work with dispersed comments in the discourse, apart from the footnotes which are totally presented by this narrator. The novel ends in the absence of the narrator, while the reader observes Khālīd al-Ṭayyib's actions and line of thought. As for the character of Zāhir al-Nābulī, little is revealed to the reader about his course of action or future, although many details are given about his family life, his thoughts and experiences in Beirut that do not help or contribute to the development of the plot. For instance, his life in Beirut as a student and as a member of the resistance movement, his friendly relationship with his neighbour, Um Fāyīz, his thoughts about his father in Nablus and his observations about the cutting of the electric current and water supply (pp.203-6), or Zāhir's introduction to Nadhīr and Khālīd and his declining to have his bath shared by another comrade (pp.99-102), all these details do not perform a functional role, apart from supplying information about certain aspects of life. Nor do the subsequent pages where we find quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky which Abu al-Ḥakam wrote on the margins of some books in his library, and which Zāhir copied out into his notebooks (pp.203-4) contribute much to the structure of events, apart from increasing our awareness of Abu al-Ḥakam's ideological disposition. Similarly, Zāhir's experience in the trenches during the skirmishes and clashes with the Christian forces, and his conversation with his comrade who had lived in Yugoslavia and his proposition that the world is like an orange that "does not disclose its beauty

until it is peeled" (p.153) do not contribute much to the artistic value of the work, nor do they help the progress of the narration or the development in its events. As one critic notes, "The Character of Zāhir al-Nābulsi has no artistic necessity for its existence at all. It is completely redundant"<sup>134</sup>. Zāhir's character could have played a better role if the author had chosen him to be the narrator, because of his close relationship with the two major protagonists of the work, in addition to his kinship to Abu al-Ḥakam. In my view, such an employment of the character would have given the narrative a more plausible structure and more meaningful conclusions. Farkouh chose not to do so, and left the character of Zāhir an unfulfilled one in both plot and action. In fact, Zāhir's relationship with the other characters ends when he arrives at Alexandria where he will sit for the examinations. The death of his closest comrades, Nadhīr and Khālīd, has no impact upon him in the world of the novel. It remains difficult to assume which line Zāhir chooses from the two lines proposed by his uncle and his father - the active, revolutionary line which his uncle proposes, or the quest of wealth with little care for national issues, his father's conviction - as the character itself practically ends before its beginning.

## (2). Language:

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<sup>134</sup>Yūsuf Ḍamrah, 'Mulāḥazāt Awwaliyyah Ḥawla Qāmāt al-Zabad,' in *al-Ra'yi Literary Supplement*, 18 March 1989.

In his novel, *Qāmāt al-Zabad*, Farkouh employs two sets of linguistic discourse that are transposed contiguously. This transposition has its semantic and thematic ramifications that introduce a structural opposition within the framework of the novel. The first set of discourse is the journalistic one which appears in references placed on the first pages of the novel, and footnotes that appear dispersed within the second set of discourse, that is the literary one. The neutrality of the first linguistic discourse contrasts sharply with the subjectivity of the second one, and functions as a source of background information about the characters and events in the area during the historical time of the novel. It also interrupts the flow of the literary discourse at critical points, an interruption which helps break the spell of illusion created by the narrative, bringing the reader back from the "make believe" world to the real world. This device can be, perhaps compared with the Brechtian device of anti-illusionist theatre. Ibrahim al-Sa'afin proposes that the journalistic discourse is "an attempt on the author's part to evade a realistic depiction of the world .... more than the suitability of such a structural device to the author's vision or the viewpoint of the novel" (1995: p.340). This proposition does not seem to be fair, because the author's experimentation has its impact on the work in a positive form. One may argue that Farkouh's employment of the footnote technique is a means of momentary emancipation for the author from "the inexorable logic of the material under study in the main text, permitting him to shift to other dimensions, to the infrastructure as well as to the wider horizons of historical speculation" (Jameson, 1971: p.9).

The second set of linguistic discourse, which is the narrative literary one, is the most pertinent one and is certainly the larger part of the work. In

this part, language plays a very significant role to the extent that other narrative elements become subordinate to it.<sup>135</sup> Mudi Bitar observes that

The method of structure in *Qāmāt al-Zabad* is a linguistic one.

Farkouh's sentences pulsate, concentrate and pant, forming a situation in general and not an event.<sup>136</sup>

It is an experimentation in the capacity of the Arabic language to express different forms of thought, and an exploration of its latent linguistic potentialities. Farkouh avoids in this work the employment of spoken dialects, although the novel is set in the Arab landscape which covers different countries with their own local dialects: Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. The whole work is written in Arabic *fuṣṣḥā*, including the dialogue between characters. It is, as the author himself says,

a deliberate act on my part to exclude local dialects because of my firm conviction that classical Arabic is more reliable in conveying meaning and ideas than the spoken dialects.<sup>137</sup>

An examination of dialogue may show a sort of standardisation in the manner characters from different countries, temperaments, educational levels

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<sup>135</sup>In his article, "al-Tajdīf raghma al-Dhikrah: Qirā'ah Awwaliyyah fi Riwayāt Elias Farkouh *Qāmāt al-Zabad*," in *al-Majallah al-Thaqāfiyyah*, No. 14-5 (1988) 211-3, Ghassān Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Khāliq comments on the significance of the language in this novel and says:

"The text, and only the text, is pertinently present, and the three characters - Nadhīr al-Ḥalabī, Khalid al-Ṭayyib and Zāhir al-Nābulsi - are the sentences, comas and strict periods of the text. Each begins where the tensions of the previous one ends".

<sup>136</sup>Sam'ān, *op. cit.* p.57.



and social classes speak. For example, as Marwān Khālīd's young friend fires two bullets to kill a scorpion, as a sign of protest against refusing his membership in the Organisation, because of his young age, we have the following argument between comrades:

“ليست كل المسائل قابلة للحل بالرصاص. دعه يعالج المسائل الصغيرة بهدوء.”

اعترضت: “هذا زمان الصخب.”

كتم شيئا شارف على قوله ، صمت للحظة ثم قال: “زمان الفعل المتأني الوائق يا رفيق. الرصاص رخيص إنما هو صعب جدا ، وعندما تساوي بين رخصه وصعوبته فانك تساوي بين الحياة والموت. .... دحك من لعبة النار يا رفيق ، ليست مناسبة لكل الأوقات. إذا جعلتها تأخذك فلن تعود منها أبدا. هل أقول لك أننا عشاق حرية ولسنا بمحترفي بنادق ، أظنك تعرف هذا. النار عند الضرورة القصوى وإلا فإنها سوف تحرق الجميع وربما مضرمها قبل الجميع”

Not all issues can be solved by bullets. Let him treat small matters calmly.

This is the time of fury, I protested. He withheld something he was about to say. After a while of silence, he said, It is time for planned and confident action, comrade. Bullets are cheap, but they are problematic. When you weigh out their cheapness and difficulty, you consider the difference between life and death. ... Avoid this playing with fire, comrade, it is not suitable for all times. If you give yourself to it, you will never come back. Shall I tell you that we are lovers of freedom and not fans of guns? I think you know this. Bullets should only be used when

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**137** In an interview with the author on 16th of March 1996 in Amman, Jordan.

there is no other alternative. Otherwise, all will be burnt with their fire, and perhaps the initiator before the rest. (pp.31-2).

A simi

Ṭayyib and Nadhīr al-Ḥalabi about the nature of war:

تراجعت نبرة الاستفزاز في صوت الطيب إلا أنه قال :

“لصالح من؟ من سينتصر بها ومن الطرف الذي ستهزمه عسكرياً؟”

“الجميع مهزومون”

فاحتج خالد الطيب: “لا ، هذه فلسفة وليست بعسكريات أبدا ، ولا حتى سياسة. قل لي  
أكانت مثل هذه الأشياء - أعني الجميع مهزومين والحرب هي المنتصر الدائم إلى آخره -  
أهذه الأشياء كانت ضمن دوراتك العسكرية ؟ أكنت تتلقى تدريبك في السور بون قسم  
الفلسفة ، أم في كلية لانسينغ اند هرتفورد في أكسفورد”.

زعق نذير الحلبي: “وهل تعتقد أن هذه حرب عسكرية؟”

“ماذا تسميها إذن تراشق بالمفرقات الملونة ها أم هي قذف الورد بالزهور؟” ...

“أتعرف ، أنها أي شيء يسبب القتل ما عدا أنها حرب عسكرية”.

وإسرائيل؟” قال خالد الطيب “وإسرائيل مع ... مع من من الأشياء هي؟ هذا الشيء أم ذاك

الشيء أم الشيء الآخر أم الشيء الأول أم الشيء العاشر؟

وضحك ، إلا أن نذير الحلبي لم يضحك حافظ على عبوسه وصوب إبهامه نحو خالد الطيب

وقال: “إنها إن اردت المسألة هكذا ، انها مع الشيء ككل.

The provocative tone in al-Ṭayyib’s voice retreated, but he said,

“In whose favour is it? Who will win and who will be militarily defeated?”

“All will be defeated.”

"No! This is philosophy and not militarism at all, nor is it even politics," protested Khālīd al-Ṭayyib "tell me, were these things, I mean, all will be defeated and war is the only constant winner, etc., were these things part of your military training? Were you trained in the Sorbonne at the Department of Philosophy, or at Lancing and Hertford in Oxford?"

"Do you think this is a military war?" shouted Nadhīr al-Ḥalabī.

"What do you call it then? An exchange of coloured fireworks, or is it a bombardment of flowers with roses?"

"It is anything that causes killing, but not a military war."

"And what about Israel?" asked Khālīd al-Ṭayyib. "Where do you classify her role? Is it with this thing, that thing, the other, the latter or the tenth one?"

"Khālīd al-Ṭayyib laughed, but Nadhīr did not. He maintained his grimness and pointed his finger at Khālīd al-Ṭayyib and said,

"If you want the question to be answered in this manner, Israel is for all this" (pp.63-4).

One of the extraordinary conversations that require to be noted is the one that takes place between Khālīd and his young friend and comrade, Marwān, who takes a decision to kill all the big heads whom he considers traitors. In this conversation, one finds in the words of Marwān, the simple, Bedouin, young man an intellectuality much beyond what one would expect of such a person:

"هتفت به من عمق الخوف الضارب في هذا جنون ، جنون"

سخر مني وتلفظ بلهجته شبه البدوية: "ومن قال اننا في زمن عاقل؟"

"You are mad," I cried at him from the depths of terror within me "this is madness, madness."

With his semi-bedouin dialect, he said mockingly, "Who claims we are living in an age of reason?" (p.227).

The standardisation of language used in expressing the thoughts and words of characters coming from different backgrounds extends beyond the comrades in the organisation to include ordinary people, such as Thurayyah, the Egyptian barmaid and the Madam, Khālīd's mistress. This conformity, perhaps, deprives the work of some artistic qualities that could have otherwise brought it closer to the world of realism. It is incredible, for instance, to find an uneducated woman express her thoughts through such a language that is put into the mouth of the Madam, although the author justifies the level of language used by her through adding at the end of the words a hint that these were mere thoughts in the Madam's head and not spoken to Khālīd:

أعرفت لماذا ادمدم بعد المضاجعة؟ قالت المدام يوما "لاني أفتقد فيك حلمي، مشروعي الذي ظننته أنت. أنت البعيد عن أن تخلص نفسك، فكيف أرتجي فيك خلاصي؟ ... لكنك تبقى المتاح الممكن. حقا اني أجذبك محاولة تقريبيك إلى صدري، إلى مكمن الفراشات علك تتلون بألوانها فتصفو فأصفو أنا. .... ها هي الفراشات تكسو جدران غرفتك القاحلة الا من الكتب وتلك المرأة المعزولة مثلك وجملة شاعرك بخط أحمر، فالفراشات ليست ما بين بين انها خضراء، صفراء، زرقاء حمراء بيضاء وأحيانا كامدة لكن نقط اللون الفاقع تبعد لون التراب الفاسد عن أجنتها. أنت ما بين لست بقادر على اكتساب ألوانها لونك لون التراب الماحل .. أنت حلمي المشوش المجهض من قبل، الملوث قبل أن يظأ الأرض ... " لكن المدام لم تقل هذا لخالد الطيب، أبقتة حوارها السري."

Do you know why I hum after having sex with you, said the Madam once because I miss my dream, the project which I sought in you. You are far from saving yourself, so how can I seek salvation in you? ... Yet you remain the available

possibility. I pull you, it is true, trying to draw you closer to my chest, to the nest of the butterflies, hoping that you may obtain their colours and be purified, and so would I. .... Here the butterflies cover the walls of your empty room, except for books and that isolated woman, like yourself and your poet's sentence in red. .... Butterflies are not 'in-between'. They are green, yellow, red, blue, white and sometimes pale. But the spots of gleaming colour remove the spoiled colour of soil away from their wings. You are 'in-between', unable to acquire their colours. Your colour is that of the barren soil. .... You are my confused dream, aborted beforehand, polluted before treading the earth... The Madam did not say this to Khālīd al-Tayyib, and kept it as her secret dialogue" (pp.187-8).

The absence of the local dialects deprives the work also of the ability of identifying the origins of the characters without the assistance of an external device, such as information provided by the anonymous narrator, or remarks made by the character or other characters that indicate the homeland of each one. In this novel, there is no apparent difference between the ways Thurayyah, the Egyptian barmaid, the Lebanese Madam speak, nor between the dialects of Nadhīr the Syrian and Khālīd the Jordanian. In fact, there is no artistic justification for the standardised Arabic spoken, as the characters belong to different Arab countries, apart from the author's choice. They can be citizens of one Arab country without affecting the plot or the artistic qualities of the work. Nor does any change in their class and educational levels or professions cause any damage to the artistic quality of the novel.

One of the features that characterises the language of the literary discourse in this work is the extensive use of descriptive passages. These descriptive passages sometimes perform the function of revealing some innate

traits of the characters themselves. For example, Khālid's description of Maḥmūd Sa'īd's painting, *Banāt Baḥrī* (pp.117-8) is one of the central passages to the comprehension of the thematic structure of the novel, and can be considered as a basis for the appreciation of Khālid al-Ṭayyib's character. As Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ notes,

Khālid's description of Maḥmūd Sa'īd's painting, *Banāt Baḥrī*, provides an accurate explanation of his own character and qualities. .... It sums up his lustful, possessive self, his preoccupation with attaining physical gratification, regardless of the other (1993: p.112).

Similarly, Nadhīr al-Ḥalabī's description of St. George's icon (pp.168-9) reveals the potentiality of his character, the disposition for becoming a saintly, transcendental figure, striking a sharp contrast to the sensuous, mundane figure of Khālid al-Ṭayyib. Other descriptive passages reveal the nature of places and anticipate forthcoming events. Such are the descriptive passages of Damascus, the church in Aleppo, al-Ashrafiyyah in East Beirut and Nadhīr's uncle's house there (pp.43-4, 167-8, 196-7) and Khālid's description of Marwān's home, the room of the hotel in Alexandria and the seashore and the casinos of the city (pp.27-8, 61, 174-77).

A second linguistic feature which characterises the narrative literary discourse and which is related to the narrative techniques is the manipulation of linguistic associations and the generation of polysemic structures, evoking different semantic patterns in the text. This feature is common in Western works during the twenties and thirties of this century, especially in the novels of Proust, Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner. It seems that Farkouh was influenced by some of these writers, especially that his knowledge of English and his wide

readings in English literature are unquestionable.<sup>138</sup> Polysemic aspects are evident in the internal monologues and recollections of both Nadhīr and Khālīd. For instance, when Nadhīr thinks about the words which Abu 'Alī, the porter in the building where Nadhīr, Khālīd and Zāhir work, concerning Tel al-Za'tar, the association of ideas flows from the narrow site of the camp to encompass the whole Arab world. It then concentrates on one mountain height, Qaṣīn, moves to a song where the singer chants with her lips painted with Max Factor, to the memory of Abu 'Alī's own homeland, and then to the question of knowledge, ignorance, the pretence of ignorance, and ultimately to the book of Genesis (p.114).

A third linguistic feature that characterises the narrative literary discourse in *Qāmāt al-Zabad* is the employment of theological references and allusions. The pervasiveness of Christian terminology and concepts is undoubtedly another influence that can perhaps be traced to Joyce, or at least lend itself to comparisons which can be made between the works of the two authors. As in Joyce's *Dubliners*, the concepts of sinfulness and redemption are integrated in the thematic structure of Farkouh's novel. Other terms and concepts that recur in this work and that relate mainly to Christian theology are the binary oppositions "light" and "darkness", "love" and "hatred", "faithfulness" and "betrayal", "sin" and "redemption" and "obedience" and "disobedience". In some instances, the language of Christian theology

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<sup>138</sup> Farkouh translated several works from English to Arabic. Among his translations are: *The Old Gringo* a novel by Carlos Fuentes (Picador. Pan Books, 1987); trans. into English by Colin Margaret Sayers Peden and the author.

becomes direct and explicit to the degree that makes it reminiscent of sermons of clergymen. This is evident in the words with which Nadhīr's mother introduces her gift to him on his twentieth birthday:

نذير ، نحن لسنا أفضل الناس ، الجميع فيهم الخير ، وربما لا نكون الاهل الذين استطاعوا  
تحقيق ما أملوا به. لا بأس ايضا. المهم القلب الصالح كما قلت لك مرارا ، والصليب رمز  
محبة وفداء ، ليس أكثر ، محبة البشر وفداء للبشر وخلاصهم في سبيل خيرهم. دم المسيح جاء  
ليغفر الخطايا ، كل الخطايا ، كل خطايا البشر ، كل البشر. هذا معنى الصليب وهذا مغزى  
الصليب. لا تنس هذا ابدا. وصيتي لك في عيدك العشرين ، فليبارك الرب خطواتك أينما  
ذهبت

Nadhīr, we are not the best people. All people have goodness in them, and we are not, perhaps, the parents who succeeded in fulfilling the dreams they had. Never mind, as I often told you, what matters really is the good heart. The cross is just a symbol for love and sacrifice, love and redemption of mankind and their salvation. Redemption and salvation are the way to man's well-being. Christ's blood washes off sin, all sin, all people's sins, the sins of all human beings. This is the meaning and significance of the cross and crucifixion. Never forget this. It is my commandment to you on your twentieth birthday. May the Lord bless you wherever you go (p.233).

A fourth linguistic feature of the narrative literary discourse in *Qāmāt al-Zabad*, is the poetic emotional language. In fact, some passages are concentrated, condensed, laconic to the extent that they can be extracted from their contexts and read as free verse. For example, the following is a brief internal monologue of Khālid after the first officer on the ship, Marwān, mentions the ship's name to him:



التقطت لهاث الروح وأطلقتها بحجم العذاب ، ناديتك ، هتفت باسمك ، مروان ، أحملك فى  
داخلى أبدا أم أنك سفينة تبحر بي إلى ضياع بلا فجر ولا مرفأ

I caught the panting of the soul, released it as large as agony. I  
called upon you, called your name, Marwān, do I always carry  
you within me, or are you a ship that transports me to a  
dawnless loss, to no ports? (p.246).

There are many passages that combine religious connotations with  
poetic profundity. For instance, Nadhīr's internal monologue about the  
pro

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1), or his monologue about his pessimistic disposition (pp.137-8).

A fifth linguistic feature of the narrative literary discourse is the  
manipulation of different forms of humour. There are comic situations meant  
to reduce the tension of the gloomy atmosphere in the world of the novel, a  
sort of comic relief. In some instances, jokes express scepticism and cynicism  
with which intellectuals view the Arab status quo and the prospects for the  
future. As an example of the latter, we have Nadhīr, Khālid, Zāhir and the  
other political writers who are in the building where the journal is printed  
looking at their comrade who snatches the cup of tea while looking at the  
stickers of photographs of the martyrs on the walls there, and cracking jokes  
about providing the best sticker for the colleague who falls in the battle there  
(p.66). However, such a bitter humour reflects not only the degree of  
despondency which the fighters have reached, but the futility of their  
endeavour to maintain their morale for fighting a losing battle.

In his attempt to experiment with the form of the novel, Farkouh  
achieves a comparatively new outlook for the novel in Jordan which he later

develops in his work produced in the following years. However, parallel to this experimental trend in the production of the novel in Jordan, a more conventional production that attempted to emulate the "realist" production of the Arabic novel in other Arab countries continued to be produced in Jordan, though this production was on the whole less developed in its technique, plot and structure. The following chapter will focus on some of this conventional production.

PART THREE

CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS WITH  
CONVENTIONAL TECHNIQUES

CHAPTER FIVE

ZIYAD QASIM:

THE VULNERABLE CASTLE

During the eighties a number of Jordanian writers produced works that were a continuation of the trend that dominated the late sixties and seventies in the novel, mainly those of Jordanian writers, such as Amīn Shinnār and Fu'ād al-Qusūs. Other writers of this generation emulated the works of other Arab novelists, such as the early works of Naguib Mahfouz, Ḥannā Mīna and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf. It is important to note that this production of the novel in Jordan was not sufficiently developed in terms of its narrative techniques, structure and characterisation to be justly classified as works of literary merit. They do not on the whole represent a breakthrough in the genre of the novel, neither at a local nor at a national level. Among the writers of this trend are

Hāshim Gharaybeh, Yūsuf al-Ghazu, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Mangho and Ṭāhir al-‘Adwān. Their works on the whole are in no way different from the works of the seventies and sixties, although they have a vast production of novel both at home and in the Arab world to draw on the experiences which other novelists have undertaken, in addition to a large number of translated novels from world literature that can enrich their own experiences and help them develop their skills at handling the techniques. It is necessary to give a very brief reference to some of these works, so as to give an idea about the nature of this production.

In 1982, Hāshim Gharaybeh produced his work, *Bayt al-Asrār*,<sup>139</sup> (*House of Mysteries*), based on a folk tale about a ghoul who kept his charming, tender daughter under lock and key in his palace. Every evening the ghoul returned with a huge lamb on his shoulder and a large pile of wood on his back to cook and devour before he goes to sleep. The folk tale ends when the ghoul's daughter elopes with a shepherd and gets married to him. Gharaybeh took this folk tale almost literally, replacing the ghoul by Ghalib Bek who robs his tribe, escapes to Damascus where he learns the art of commerce, in addition to reading and writing, before returning to his village with his beautiful, tender daughter, and settle in a palace which he had built for him where he keeps his daughter under lock and key. Even the end of the plot is almost identical with that of the folk tale, as we have Ghalib Bek's daughter elope with Daḥḥām, a shepherd whom she rescues from drowning in a pool.

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<sup>139</sup> Hāshim Gharāybeh, *Bayt al-Asrar*. Amman, Dar al-Ufuq al-Jadīdah, 1982.

The ideological message which the work strives to convey is superficially imposed on the text, as the work does not gain any symbolism through the use of the folk tale. Gharaybeh's work which in one sense seems to be an emulation of Amin Shinnar's work, *al-Kabūs (The Nightmare)*, falls short of reaching its level. The two plots which Gharaybeh's work has, and whose objective is explicitly clear, the decline of the aristocratic class and its internal collapse, which the daughters of the ghoul and Ghalib Bek may represent, run in two parallel lines that make the second a commentary, or an enlargement on the folk tale.

In a project analogous to that of Fu'ād al-Qusūs in *al-'Awdah min al-Shamāl (Returning from the North)*, Ṭāhir al-'Adwān attempts to present a social and political document for the history of the area during the forties and up till the Palestinian disaster in 1948. In his work, *Wajh al-Zamān* **140** (*Face of Time*), al-'Adwān presents two parallel lines of narration that intersect at points to unite and produce the work's political ideology. The first line of narration relates the unfortunate events that take place in al-Baq'ah plain, an area to the north of Amman, where a Bedouin tribe is forced by the scarcity of rain to borrow money from a usurer, 'Ulayyān, whose main assistant in his usurious activities is one member of the tribe, Mas'ūd. The suffering of this tribe is revealed through the lot of Fāṭima's family whose debt increases and 'Ulayyān seizes the family's land as payment for its debt. The second line of narration projects the Palestinian plight under British mandate

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**140** Ṭāhir al-'Adwān, *Wajh al-Zamān*. Amman, Dar al-Karmil, 1987.

and the gradual infiltration of the Zionists into Palestine, aided by the mandate authority. The migration of Fāṭima's family from their land coincides with the Palestinian people's expulsion from their homeland, a parallelism that gives the work symbolic implication. The two lines of narration also intersect as Aḥmad, Fāṭima's son serves in the Jordanian army which the British form, and is killed while defending Palestinian soil from occupation.

Ṭāhir al-'Adwān's work moves one step further in its artistic merit from al-Qusūs's work, as he manages to control the two lines of narration and combine them together in a better manner than his predecessor. However, the work suffers from basic defects in its structure, particularly in terms of character delineation where we find the symbolic role imposed on their presentation in a superficial manner. They are "flat" characters, to borrow E. M. Forster's term,<sup>141</sup> that are either black or white. In fact, one can ascribe qualities in stead of names to these characters, such as good, evil, greedy, generous, etc. The work also suffers from an extensive use of rhetorical statements, commentaries and ideological moralising, reminiscent of al-Manfalūṭī's style. The explicitness of the ideological recipe leaves a negative imprint on the work that detracts from its artistic achievement.

al-'Adwān produced a sequel to his work, *Wajh al-Zamān*, a second work, Ḥā'it al-Ṣafṣāf<sup>142</sup> (*The Wall of the Willow*) which attempts to follow

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<sup>141</sup>E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*. Edited by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), pp.46-52.

<sup>142</sup>Ṭāhir al-'Adwān, *Ha 'it al-Ṣafṣāf*. Amman, Dar al-Karmil, 1990.

up the developments in events from 1948 up to the June defeat of 1967. This work which assumes a wider scope in both time and place, and which employs a larger number of characters, does not offer any improvement on his earlier production and suffers of the same artistic flaws which his first work has. Its characters are evidently symbols of human qualities and are obtrusively imposed on them. They never develop or change the course of their action. They are puppets moved by the author to confirm or denounce an ideological purport.

The narrative techniques which this group of writers use are the conventional ones employed in the Arabic "realist" novel. Through the eyes of an omniscient narrator, events are presented in a chronological order. The narrator also introduces characters, comments on their actions and foretells their outcome. The recollection technique is sometimes employed, but even this comes through the eyes and phrasing of the narrator and his own judgement. In some instances, we have the dream or the nightmare used in some works. However, this does not add to the value of the work, as it does not perform an artistic function.<sup>143</sup>

The language which this group of writers adopt in their works is classical Arabic. The omniscient narrator and the characters conform almost

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<sup>143</sup> See, for example, in al-'Adwān's work, *Wajh al-Zamān*, pp.83, 146 where we have Fatima, the main protagonist in the novel, report to Um Hafiz, the old woman who interprets dreams, a nightmare she had. The nightmare itself does not give insight into what happens or is going to happen to Fatima's family, but rather confirms what the reader already is aware of, that is the stress under which Fatima is labouring.

entirely to one set of linguistic discourse, a uniformity that perhaps distances them from their intended presentation of reality. In some works, however, we find the local dialects in dialogue, or in the presentation of some folkloric songs or episodes.<sup>144</sup>

### *Abnā' al-Qal'ah (Sons of The Castle)*

In 1990, a novel appeared on the market in Jordan that had no publisher, printed in very small font and with little attention to its appearance. In fact, no critical attention was paid to it, and it did not have any reviews in the literary supplements of the local newspapers.<sup>145</sup> The novel was the second work for a Jordanian writer who was unknown to the literary circles. Ziyad Qasim's<sup>146</sup> first work, *al-Mudīr al-'Ām*,<sup>147</sup> (*The Director-*

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<sup>144</sup>See, for instance, the opening lines of Gharaybeh's novel, *Bayt al-Asrar* p.7., where we have an imitation of the folk tale's phrasing in which the ghoul's daughter is substituted by the Bek's daughter. In *Wajh al-Zamān*, al-'Adwān employs the Bedouin dialect in some dialogues. See for example, pp.11, 29, 35.

<sup>145</sup>The first critical appreciation of this work appeared in 1992 in the paper submitted by Nazīh abu Niḍāl to the symposium on the novel in Jordan and its place on the map of the Arabic novel. The article is entitled "Riwāyat al-Thamānīnāt Bayn al-Wāqi'iyyah wal-Ḥadāthah". The proceedings of this symposium were published by the Ministry of Culture in Amman in 1993 in a book form entitled *al-Riwāyah al-Urduniyyah wa-Mawqī'uha min Kharīṭat al-Riwayah al-'Arabiyyah*. I came to know of this novel by Abu Niḍāl's article which is included in the proceedings of that symposium.

<sup>146</sup>Ziyad Qasim's name is transliterated as "Ziyād Qāsim," (see "Note on Transliteration," p.9).



*General*), had as its central plot the ordeal of a Jordanian girl whose parents lived in Lebanon for a period of time until the civil war broke out and forced many people to leave Lebanon. It centres around Anjil's experiences as a secretary at several institutions, and the exploitation which she had been exposed to. This work which did not receive any attention had the promise of a gifted writer through the character delineation, the method of narration and the structure of the work. It followed the form of a biography where events are narrated by the protagonist, Anjil, in a chronological order. The attraction which this work offers lies in its revelation of the psychological conflicts which the protagonist suffers from, particularly when her livelihood is threatened.

Ziyad Qasim's second work, *Abna' al-Qal'ah*<sup>148</sup> (*Sons of the Castle*), which remained for several years unnoticed by critics in Jordan is perhaps the first novel in Jordan whose setting and landscape are Amman with its heterogeneous population. It is a sort of social, historical, political, economic and cultural document that reveals the contradictions contained within a society whose history extends only seventy-five years. The two basic dimensions that occupy the narrative's concern are embedded within the title of the novel: the human and the spatial. The heterogeneity of the human element which occupy the landscape figures prominently and confronts the proposition of a homogeneous population enjoying a uniformity, an emphasis

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<sup>147</sup> Ziyad Qasim, *al-Mudīr al-ʿĀm*. Amman, 1988. N.P.

on difference to negate any proposition suggestive of Jordanianicity,<sup>148</sup> analogous to those countries whose history goes back hundreds of years. Nevertheless, through this same method of negation, the insistence on the absence and the negation of the existence the novel establishes the very essential quality it denies. The characteristic quality of these "sons" is their difference and diversity, as opposed to similarity and homogeneity. This concept is further underscored when in the opening pages the castle is presented as the product of different civilisations: the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic civilisations. The spatial dimension which contains the outcome of these diverse forces is the castle which in its present manifestation of their influences negates and denies their durability. These civilisations left only "ruins of temples, columns, squares and graves," while the fortifying walls are "worn-out stones some of which had fallen downhill," (p.5).

The work postulates a proposition of multiplicity as opposed to singularity, plurality as contrasted with identity. In confrontation with the semantic concept of the castle, the description undermines and destabilises the denotations of the spatial term. The juxtaposition of the present with the past

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<sup>148</sup>Ziyad Qasim, *Abna' al-Qal'ah*. Amman, 1989. N.P. All subsequent references to this work are documented within the text.

<sup>149</sup>In his discussion of the messages of the image, Roland Barthes uses the suffix "-ity" to derive a name from the adjective "Italian" to refer to "the condensed essence of everything that could be Italian". See Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*. Essays selected and translated by Steven Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p.488. I have borrowed the same derivation to indicate that there is nothing in this work that reveals the intrinsically Jordanian, neither historically, aesthetically or culturally.

adds a yet more sinister and sombre implication depriving the place of its intrinsic quality, i.e., its immunity. The defencelessness and vulnerability of the castle in the present repudiate its lexical and historical denotations, and the legitimacy proposed in the term "sons" is denigrated by the connotation. It is the saga of the castle and its sons which reveals the transient nature of the population and the defencelessness of the place. This inference gains credibility from the very opening pages of the work. The valley is overlooked by two significant monuments: on the right stands the Roman amphitheatre in whose tunnels, dens and recesses waves of refugees, settlers, runaways and vagabonds have taken refuge all through the ages; while on the left, the castle which once represented power and immunity, stands deserted, defenceless and neglected. Yet a more powerful connotation comes through the stream that moves continuously in the valley. The permanent existence of the stream is accompanied by its constant motion and change, connoting the constant change in the makeup of the demographic component within a permanent landscape. The portrait of the community is reflected in the nature of the landscape, where the structure of the location reveals the structures of community. The three streets are situated in a hierarchic design, and within each street the reader comes across stone mansions, straw-and-mud-built houses, rusty-tin huts and tents. Even trees stand in unequal height and form (p.5). This portrait of a hierarchic and anarchic social structure reveals the unbridgeable gap that separates and divides the population, prognosticating a turmoil in social and economic spheres.

No less ominous than the spatial and the human dimensions is the temporal one where the novel is set within a historical period of pernicious

permutations of unrest. The novel takes as its point of departure the end of World War II and extends over a period of more than twenty years that terminates with the June defeat of 1967. The reference to the "fall of Berlin" and "the destruction of Hiroshima" emphasises the concept of defeat rather than victory, destruction, not construction. In fact the period which the novel chooses for its action constitutes one of the most unstable periods in the history of the region when the Arab world witnessed the rise of independent Arab states, national ideologies, revolutions and counter-revolutions, projects of pacts and mergers, conflicts and disputes and ultimately wars and defeats. This asymmetricality in the spatio-temporal and demographic setting invites an expectation of a grotesque experience where the crude and cruel override and displace the refined and humane.

The pivot around which events centre and characters evolve is a Sarcasian family, Shamsuddīn, his son Fakhrī, and his two daughters, Hikmat and Fawziyyah, whose sudden turn of fortune comes through an unexpected road accident that kills Hikmat and her husband, and leaves Fawziyyah with a wooden leg, just as Shamsuddīn was planning to marry a 16-year-old Damascene girl, Najāh, the daughter of Abu 'Abduh the owner of the coffee-house. Grieved at what befell his children, Shamsuddīn the once valiant knight and warrior, abstains from food and avoids human community until he dies. The tragedy of Shamsuddīn's family coincides with another greater tragedy, that is the Palestinian people's plight. As waves of refugees flood East Jordan from Palestine, Fawziyyah receives her two nephews, Nāyif and Fāris, who lost both parents in the car accident. Fearing for the safety of his two grandsons, their grandfather brings them to Fawziyyah from Haifa and leaves

them for her care. This melodramatic opening gives a negative impression about the work. However, the end of the melodrama comes at the point when we see the interaction between these three characters: Fakhrī, Nāyif and Fāris with their local and national communities.

The novel can be seen on one level as the narrative of Fawziyyah's experience as a foster mother, a woman who never marries, but performs the role of a mother for three boys. However, the novel may be read in a broader context, and that is the relationship between different social, economic and political ideologies in alliance and confrontation. This reading gains its substance through the network of relations that develop between and around the members of Shamsuddīn's family, primarily Fakhrī and Fāris.

The novel ends with the destruction of Shamsuddīn's house, in an Israeli air raid, the amputation of Fawziyyah's second leg and her ultimate death. Central to the thematic structure of the novel is the concept of corruption.

Corruption is the dominant characteristic of almost every aspect of life which the novel explores. Social and moral corruption appear in Fakhrī's practices, exploiting the wealth of the family in the seduction of girls, gambling and prostitution (pp.76-7). Nevertheless, the spread of gambling, crime, thuggery and prostitution form an essential part of the portrait which the novel puts under scrutiny (pp.37-8, 56-9, 67, 70-2, 166-8, 176-8). Social exploitation culminates in the exploitation by a whole community of an individual, 'Imran, the idiot, who practically becomes a valuable source of free labour:

No single shop, store or house 'Imran did not clean. He rubbed and scrubbed floors, polished counters, cleaned gardens and rebuilt their stone fences. He cleared blocked channels and sewers, not a single house did not benefit from his services.

'Imran freely served almost all the houses in the avenue, out of love or fear, no one can tell. Without a complaint, without hesitation, he served them all. On their part, the residents expected his immediate obedience and compliance to their will (p.55).

Corruption is manifest also in education and culture. Fakhrī obtains his university degree by bribery, while indulging in his sensual pleasures (p.201) and becomes a teacher. Similarly, Muṣliḥ, the editor of *al-Yaqazahh* Literary Supplement, promotes those who offer him services and utilities as prominent literary figures, through publishing and eulogising their production (pp.327-31).

Combined with these forms of corruption, the text exposes yet a more serious form of corruption, that is, political dishonesty. This manifests itself through the abuse of power, the humiliation and oppression of the people and the imprisonment of party members by the Second Bureau (pp.170-1). In such a climate, opportunism thrives and displaces honesty and commitment. Mālik, Fakhrī's friend, finds in joining the Nasserite Movement a means of achieving power and protection (p.288). Similarly, George, the once staunch advocate of the Ba'th Socialist Party and the librarian at the school where Fakhrī and his nephews study, defects to the Nasserite Movement (p.275). However, when Mālik finds it in his interest to renounce Nasserism, he does not hesitate to do so, thus placing his personal interest first. But the worst form of political

corruption appears when allies shift their stands and join ranks against their previous allies to topple them (p.287).

The economic corruption assumes the form of gambling and usury. Harrān, the Bedouin who settles in Amman finds in usury the best way for investing his money, without risking it. He also ends up buying the coffee-house which becomes a centre for gamblers and those who need loans from him (pp.32-3).

In a society where different forms of corruption dominate, moral probity finds no place, and betrayal in its different manifestations becomes a characteristic quality of that community. The very first pages of the work introduce this concept through a Sarcasian dirge of emigration which confirms that "those who assisted the enemy in defeating us come from, and live among, us" (p.4). The novel strives through the display of different forms of betrayal to propose a vision of the concealed maladies with which the society is inflicted. These maladies lead ultimately to defeat and destruction. Thus the dream of Arab unity is destroyed and is replaced by a narrow regionalism with continuous conflicts between these regional states. The project of unity between Egypt and Syria fails (p.195) and even when a single party seizes power in two neighbouring states, the dream of their unity remains unrealised. The negotiations between Syria, Iraq and Egypt to achieve unity come to a tragic end:

All of a sudden, advocates of unity turn into enemies and advocates of separation, each accusing the other party of causing negotiations to collapse, and of not being sincere in desiring unity. Recriminations reached a level where each party

accused the other of revisionism and acting-imperialist agents; and before comrades in Jordan woke up from their new disappointment, 'Abd al-Nasser had joined forces with all the enemies of the Ba'th from left and right, and the Ba'th fell down in Iraq, its stronghold. Thus neither the Ba'th remained in power, nor did it achieve unity (p.287).

In the economic sphere, defeat assumes the form of losing local markets to foreign investments. Mun'ish, the owner of the fizzy drinks factory, faces a new rival when his father-in-law, Abu 'Abduh starts a new factory, Fruitup, which he manages to establish with the money his daughter Najāh robs from her husband. However, through their dishonest competition, mismanagement and the imperfection of the product, Coca cola manages to take over the local market and the two local factories end up in total defeat (pp.303-4, 306-8).

All these defeats were in one sense precursors of the greater defeat which took the whole nation by surprise. The June defeat comes at the end of the novel, a bitter though natural outcome of the different forms of betrayal, dishonesty, corruption and deceit:

That detestable week of that detestable year turned streets, homes, schools, military barracks and places of worship into centres of agitation through the inflammatory songs, dances of war and news of battles. How can a writer describe, historicise or record what took place in that week? It would be an absurd deed to attempt to historicise, justify or indicate what that week contained. Declarations, mottoes, communiqués or written articles. That week ought to be removed from the calendar, should not appear in history books. That week which people thought would never end, or imagined it longer than a week,



ended in less than a week. That week revealed a nation that faltered and was intoxicated. It cannot assume a responsibility for the hallucinations or the fancied world it visualised. It was drugged and infested by fever (p.389).

This military defeat is thus seen as a logical outcome of the state which the novel depicts. It is prognosticated through the actions and fates of the individuals, the microcosms, reflecting the wider spheres of their social, political, economic, cultural, moral and military contexts. The deification of the leaders and the fetishicising of the party as displayed by the narrative text provoke an iconoclastic response that the subtext aims at reinvigorating and restructuring to reveal their pretences and displace them. The names of the characters denote concepts contrary to their practices, a contradiction that displaces the semantic and lexical denotation with the suppressed reality which their practice strive to reveal. For instance, the names of Fakhrī, Fāris, Maṣṣūr and Muṣṣīḥ denote pride, chivalry, victory and reformation respectively, while in reality they are emblems of shame, humiliation, defeat and corruption. Through this discrepancy in form and content, the author targets the text to disclose and reveal the pretensions of the declared objectives and mottoes, so as to confirm the underlying strictures which the work strives to elucidate.

## (1) Narrative Techniques and Characterisation:

### (A) *Narrative Techniques:*

In *Abna' al-Qal'ah*, Ziyad Qasim employs the omniscient narrator to present the past, present and destiny of his characters. The thoughts of characters, the flow of events and their outcome are also viewed through the eyes of the narrator who often seizes the opportunity to comment and propose possibilities for the choices posed or the developments that can occur. He also sets the scenes and portrays the landscape, probing into the psychology of his characters and their emotional responses to situations. His ironic remarks are often inserted before or after a flow of events which determine the future of a character or the outcome of actions. Similarly, the narrator introduces background information about characters, events and places whose details stand outside the time enclosed within the novel, in order to promote the reader's awareness that have their impact on the events within the time-span of the narrative. Thus the role which the omniscient narrator performs is instrumental and significant in almost all respects. The reader is heavily dependent on the information which the omniscient narrator provides, in order to construct the ideological interpretation and the signification which the narrative alludes to without openly unmasking.

For example, the narrator reveals to the reader tips about the character of Fakhrī before his formal introduction to the scene. These tips help the reader to establish a possible outcome of the subsequent events:

Staying alone at home, Fakhrī was not alarmed by the sound of heavy rain, the whistling of the wind or the roaring sound of water in the stream nearby. What worried him most was his father's absence which became the object of people's gossip and remarks. His father wants to marry Najāḥ, the sixteen-year-old girl. Everyone in the avenue knows this, but when a boy mentioned it to Fakhrī, as he heard it from his parents, Fakhrī gave him a beating, saying: "This is a lie. Your parents are liars." After this incident, no one mentioned this to Fakhrī again, yet Fakhrī believed and dreaded it. Najāḥ, the Damascene, makes a better match for him than a step-mother (p.6).

Such a passage provides the reader with some basic information about Fakhrī's age, social status and the influence he may have in the avenue. In situations when the public opinion or emotional is functional, the omniscient narrator presents this opinion or emotion. For instance, when General Glubb is asked to step down from his post as commander of the Jordanian armed forces, the Jordanian people take to the streets in celebration of the event. The omniscient narrator communicates the general emotion of the people in the following manner:

'The king expelled Glubb', this is how the simple folk wanted it. 'the king expelled Glubb'. They refused to call it retirement, resignation, stepping down or anything other than expulsion. They wanted him to be expelled, 'the king expelled Glubb', their wounds will not heal if he is killed, executed or dead. They want him to live humiliated eternally, frustrated and expelled, so that the memories of his greatness will torment and humiliate him, despair will erode his complacency, and torture and agony will fill his blood and nest in his bones. All through his miserable days he shall hear aloud, the terrifying sound of

joy, 'the king expelled Glubb, the king expelled Glubb', while fear overwhelms his breath (p.113).

By such comments, the reader is made to grasp the public feeling and the responses to events. The novel follows a strict chronology in the arrangement of events, moving in a progressive line towards the end. However, the reader is always supplied with background information about characters and the developments that affect them. For example, the background for the character of Khālīd al-Mullah, the chief accountant in Anwar 'Alī's trading company and Mālīk's father, is presented through an historical introduction that goes far beyond the actual time of the novel:

After quarrelling with his step-mother, his father expelled him, and so he was forced to leave school. His wrath drove him out of Baghdad to Amman, leaving behind everything for his father and step-mother. Here with his school education, Khālīd impressed the people as an educated person or, perhaps, as a genius, as few people could read or write, very few could use English, and still fewer knew how to handle accounting, a skill he acquired while working at a store in Baghdad during summer holidays (p.85).

Similarly, when Ḥarrān, the usurer, is introduced, the reader is allowed to see Ḥarrān's early life which goes back thirty years before the time of the novel:

A Bedouin who came to the city more than thirty years ago, after his step-brothers seized his father's property. In his tribe, he was treated as a slave, as his mother who is of Ghorani

origin<sup>150</sup> worked as a servant in his father's tribe. He tolerated his brothers' oppression and worked as a shepherd so as to support himself and his mother. After his father's death, he moved with his mother to Amman and settled at first in one of the tunnels of the Roman amphitheatre. He worked as an assistant-driver on a lorry that transported goods to and from Baghdad. On his return from one journey, he found out that his mother had died and had been buried during his absence, and the tunnel where he used to live had been occupied by new emigrants. He made the lorry his lodging, as he knew that he could not fight with the new occupants (p.31).

*(B) Characterisation:*

Ziyad Qasim presents in this work a vast landscape of human characters whose presence is essential to the thematic structure of the novel. Through the network of relations, the ideological thrust of the narrative is disclosed, manifesting a critique on, and a parody of, the real life. Nazīh abu Nīdāl finds that Ziyad Qasim required all this crowd of characters and human relationships

in order to create an inclusive, lively portrait of Amman. The different social levels and ethnic groups reveal the inner mechanisms that brought about

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<sup>150</sup>The indigenous inhabitants of the Ghor area, have darker complexion than the inhabitants of other areas in Jordan and Palestine. They often suffer from discrimination against them because of their colour, and are sometimes referred to in a derogatory manner, implying slavery.

development of Jordanian society, and the elements that contributed to its formation (1996: p.153).

However, if the characters present on one level the development of the Jordanian society, they reveal through their intricate relations and interactions the morbidity of the social and ethical norms adopted by this society which run counter to all declared moral values and political principles. The work reproduces stereotypes of people who are cruel, irrational, sensual, ostentatious, ignorant and unprincipled. It may be necessary to point out that the author falls into some errors in his characterisation, mainly in his generation issue which seems basic to the argument which the text attempts to elucidate. The youngest characters do not seem to belong to the generation of the time of which the novel makes its staging. They all belong to at least a generation that experienced the crises of the forties and were well developed and formed before the initiation of the action. This aspect of the characters does not appear to have been given adequate attention by the author, and creates contradictions within the world of the novel. For example, Fakhrī's age has special significance to the reader, in order to evaluate and comprehend the development of this character and the roles he is supposed to undertake. the novel takes as its point of departure the year 1945, and Fakhrī is assumed to be a teenager at that time, as implied by the proposition that Najāh, the 16-year-old girl at that time is more suited to match him than become his step-mother, then he needs no more than six years to leave school and join university. He practically joins the university after the Syrian-Egyptian union of 1958, which means an additional seven years to the six originally proposed. Even when the June defeat of 1967 occurs, we find Fakhrī still an irresponsible adolescent

who leaves the country with a mistress in his mother's age for Europe. This becomes absurd and unreasonable if taken by the same criteria which the novel suggests. The twenty-two years which are added to his age amount to mere figures outside the world of his character, and he remains a teenager, enjoying himself, chasing women, gambling, fighting and drinking. Even the idea of marriage which appears in the novel runs counter to the accepted traditions of the period under discussion. It is very unlikely that the youngest male in a family who has neither a job nor a settled life can be requested to get married before the eldest male who has a profession and a settled life.

Therefore most of the characters who are active in the work, apart from Fāris and Nāyif, are of an earlier generation who witnessed the end of the war as adults or as teenagers at best. The majority of the characters are mature characters with past experiences, and the possibility for their development remains unforeseen. Ghāsan 'Abd al-Khaliq observes that

Although *Abna' al-Qal'ah* appears to engage in narrating the problem of two generations, it only manages artistically to give expression to one of them, and that is the generation whose life extends from post-World War II until 1967.<sup>151</sup>

It is true that the novel engages in presenting the period that follows the end of World War II, as 'Abd al-Khaliq points out, but the real active characters are not the generation which is born after the war, but those who have witnessed the war and even in many cases, those who have been adults

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<sup>151</sup>Ghassān 'Abd al-Khālīq, "Kayfa Yumkin Kitābat 'Amman Riwā'iyyan: *Abnā' al-Qal'ah* wal-Wāqī'iyyah al-Mahḥfūziyyah," in *al-Ra'yi Literary Supplement*, (23rd July 1993).

during it. The author introduces a gallery of characters whose actions form the bulk of the novel and whose active participation creates the overall view which the narrative seeks to endorse. In order to integrate such a vast number of characters into his work, Ziyad Qasim employs a structural device that facilitates his task. He divides the novel into sections, each section begins with a name of a character whom he introduces and presents the background from which that character emerges. This device which provides the reader with the historical and psychological background, leaves little room for speculation on the development and future of that character. His characters stand as emblems of political ideologies, social classes, economic powers and moral values. It can be argued that there is no single character in this work that can be considered as a main protagonist, since none of them "incarnates the moral vision of the world inherent in the total novel" (Harvey, 1965: 56). They are on the whole "intermediate" or "background" figures and characters, to borrow Harvey's terms.

(i) *The Intermediate figures:*

The intermediate figures perform a key role in the novel, by presenting different angles of the world which the narrative seeks to recreate. The number of these figures is large, and they all conspire to complement the overall picture of the society which the novel contains. The two figures emblematic of power, abused and manipulated are Fakhrī, Fawziyyah's brother, and Muḥārib, the thug who intrudes on the avenue. Nevertheless, the author treats these two figures differently, applying a double standard in evaluating their performances. Fakhrī, the unruly, licentious libertine is



sympathetically approached by the implied author through the favourable terms by which he is introduced:

A strongly-built athlete, with broad shoulders and middle height. He inherited from his father his elegance and the colour of his eyes. He had a fair complexion, blonde hair, green eyes (p.14).

Muḥārib, on the other hand, is presented with less sympathy by stressing opposing qualities to those of Fakhrī:

He was tall, with broad shoulders, with a wide, round face stained by brown spots that look like burns. He had thick, swelling lips resembling those of Negroes, with thick, black hair, dark black skin. He had a deep, sharp voice that reminds one of magicians. His thick toes showed out of his sandals, the skin of his toes became insensate, and their nails hardened like bones. The ends of his wide, grey shirt fell loose over his dark, khaki trousers

(p.164).

The contrast which the reader notes in the manner by which these two characters are introduced, the concentration on the two binary oppositions of “white” and “black”, “elegance” and “ugliness”, and the derogative connotations derived from the description of Muḥārib’s appearance, place him in an unfavourable perspective compared with Fakhrī. Nevertheless, a careful scrutiny of both figures reveals that they represent one phenomenon, namely, thuggery. On the one hand, Fakhrī through the display of his muscular power becomes the unchallenged leader of the boys in the avenue:

In the avenue, the boys feared him, pupils at school avoided fighting with him, while teachers were always reluctant to

confront him. He had no interest in learning, and after his father's death, he no longer feared anyone. His father's severity found its expression in him through quarrels at school and broils in the avenue (p.15).

On the other hand, Muḥārib, who comes to the avenue as an intruder on Eid al-Fitr, establishes his right to remain in the avenue through the display of force. The battle which he purposefully undertakes against the strongly-built driver of the crane and his decisive victory over his opponent, establishes his right to remain in the avenue, and exploit its population (pp.166-8).

Seen by a neutral observer, Muḥārib is, in fact, nothing more than the projection of Fakhrī's own practices. Fakhrī exploits his sister's wealth to satisfy his own egoistic ends. All that he cares about is to have sufficient money for gambling, drinking, and chasing women inside and outside his avenue (pp.19, 43, 45-6, 54, 67, 76-7, 88, 276,341-3). Just before the war breaks out, Fakhrī leaves the country for Europe in the company of his new mistress, this time the mother of his friend and classmate Mālik (p.387). He also manipulates his sister's fortune to purchase the degree which he gets from Cairo. Ironically, the confrontation which takes place between Fakhrī and Muḥārib and in which Muḥārib is defeated, starts in the gambling place in the coffee-house. The loser in the battle was also a loser in gambling; thus the nature of the conflict is revealed: it is the struggle for domination over the community where the place has room just enough for one. The narrator's comment after Fakhrī wins the battle contains innuendoes that conceal beneath the superficial celebration a sense of ineptitude and renewed bondage:

Everyone in the street rejoiced: the barber, grocers, Ḥarrān, 'Awwād al-Nimr and 'Imran. Peace was restored, and the street was once more declared the property of its sons. In a few moments, the long occupation was repulsed (p.179).

In reality, Muḥārib's defeat means the end of competition for domination over a community between two contesting forces that have one basic trait, i.e., exploitation.

Political ideologies that are given prominence in this work are mainly two: the Ba'th Arab Socialist Party, and the Nasserite Movement. Both of these trends claim to adopt a nationalist ideology that believes in Arab unity. Manṣūr, Fawziyyah's close neighbour and the Arabic language teacher at the school where Fakhrī and his nephews study is the emblem of this ideology. Fāris, Fawziyyah's youngest nephew who joins this party with Manṣūr's son, Berjas, represent the outcome of this ideology. The emblem of the second ideology, that is, Nasserism, is the ex-member of the Ba'th Party, George, the librarian at the same school where Fakhrī and his nephews study. A third ideology included, though given less emphasis in the work, is the Muslim Brotherhood Group whose thought is represented in Nāyif, Fāris's elder brother. The close relationship between the first two ideologies, their alliance at an early stage and their confrontation at another, reveal the pathology of which these two parties suffer and consequently the inevitability of disintegration and destruction. George and Manṣūr appear at the beginning as comrades in one party advocating the same ideology. Manṣūr who is when the novel begins in his forties, and has three sons, the eldest of whom is of Fāris's age and studies at school in the same class, moves from a fervent advocate of nationalism to renouncing his principles and ideology. In spite of

the final note in the novel which suggests Manşūr's recantation and renunciation of his ideology, the novel reveals that such a response was prompted by the actual collapse of the party which he was assumed to represent. His response to the death of his son, Berjas, in the confrontation with General Glubb's soldiers, is profoundly serene and dignified:

'Many fell like Berjas,' This was Manşūr's comfort to those who came to extend their condolences to him. 'What is important really is that the Baghdad Pact has been aborted; this is what matters. .... We teach people to love their homeland, but it is up to them to choose the means by which they express that love. Berjas chose his own way through which he expressed his love'

(pp.110-1).

But when he sees his own party divided, and conflicts over power become so great and costly, he renounces the party and openly declares it to be a destructive force (pp.375-6).

Fāris, who joins the party while still a student at school, remains constant to the ideals, in spite of the bitter experiences he undergoes. His sense of belonging deprives him of work after his graduation from university, and he spends long weeks in hiding when the leadership in Jordan is jailed and the party outlawed. Nevertheless, the real disappointment comes when he listens to his teacher Manşūr and the other members of the command denounce the party and consider it destructive. Fāris, the dreamer and idealist whose imaginary world is portrayed in his articles to al-Yaqazah Newspaper, who loves Terez, George's relative and marries Şabāh, Abu Widad's daughter, only to discover that she is someone else's woman, and whose honeymoon turns to

be the greatest torment for himself and his comrades, ends up crying for the death of his aunt and the defeat of the nation. When Fāris and Berjas say their oath of allegiance to the party,

They imagine the ruins of the castle palaces full of glory, the poor avenue a city full of life, the narrow valley green and colourful land, and eternity combines with immortality. In that moment of ecstasy, death retreats as a tyrant before the greatness of life, the universe acquires consciousness, certitude and certitude endurance and immortality

(p.79).

However, after listening to his teacher and comrade renouncing the ideology for which Berjas gave his life, and in its cause he endured all hardships, and after witnessing the coup which the military who belong to the same party led against their comrades and arrested them, Fāris leaned on the wall, sighed and looked up in agony to the castle:

It was black and pitiful, dirty, with no sign of life or greatness in its stones. Forgotten, deserted. No youth climbing its walls, no oaths echoing in it. Heavy, detestable, polluted air flows from within it. Looking downward from above breeds dizziness and fear. Its ruins are not palaces, they are rubble; nor are its temples glories, they are altars; the street below is not a lively city, but a street owned by Ḥarrān, Mun'ish and 'Awwād. The stream is not a green, colourful land, but a dirty, polluted street where tyres roll (p.376).

George, the school librarian and the once staunch advocate of the Ba'th Socialist Party a fervent patriot who, through his systematic argument and organised way of thinking, manages to bring new members to the ranks of the party from among the students, switches loyalty after the collapse of the

union between Egypt and Syria from the Ba‘th to Nasserism. He ends as an émigré in Egypt, after arranging and participating in the assassination of his ex-comrade, Mālik, Fakhrī’s friend and classmate who leaves the Nasserite movement (pp.314-6).

Mālik Khālid al-Mullah, Fakhrī’s school friend and class mate is the emblem of parasitic opportunism. During his years of study in Egypt, he joins Nasserism as part of his desire for power, protection and profit. What governs his sense of belonging is the profit he gets, and once his personal interests clash with the principles he claims to follow, it takes him no time to shed these principles and denounce them. When Fakhrī provided him with financial and moral support, he remained faithful to him:

Through his friendship to Fakhrī, Mālik realised his desires. Each time he felt the need for something, he stimulated Fakhrī’s desire for it, and when Fakhrī got that thing, it turned to be for both of them. Mālik was more than a friend to Fakhrī, he was his shadow, accompanying him wherever he went, listening to him when he spoke, and telling Fakhrī the things he would like to hear. He lit Fakhrī’s cigarettes, laughed at his jokes and did his best to amuse him. In return, Fakhrī became intimate to him and more dependent upon him p.43).

In Cairo, Mālik found it necessary to join Nasserism to find a substitute for Fakhrī, especially that he wanted to gain influence, protection and financial support to maintain himself and treat his illness (pp.155-6). At a later stage, a new source of support was added, Anwar ‘Alī the merchant with whom his father used to work. With his father’s death, Mālik found his mother’s marriage to Anwar ‘Alī a new source for wealth and protection; thus he now combined two sources for power, wealth and prestige: Anwar ‘Alī and

Nasserism. The clash between his interests and Nasserism occurred when he became director-general of the Merchants Union which required from the candidate not to belong to any political party. He renounced Nasserism, a renunciation which led to his murder (p.303).

Nāyif, Fakhrī's eldest nephew who never joins political parties stands as an emblem of Islamic thought. a hard-working student with religious beliefs, leaves Jordan for Cairo to study medicine. His religious attitude makes the Egyptian authorities suspect his membership of a Muslim party, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, and this leads to his expulsion (pp.120-1). Nāyif joins the Jordanian airforce and gets his wings (p.197). He is ultimately killed in an air battle between the Israeli Mirage fighters and the Jordanian Hawker-Hunter jets over al-Sammū', a small village near Hebron (pp.378-9). The continuous praise which the narrator gives to Nāyif, and the continuous insistence on the idea that he did not belong to any political movement, reveals the concealed intention of the author to denigrate and reject all political movements, and question their sincerity.

In viewing the politics as mapped in the novel, the reader is invited to repudiate all political parties, regardless of the ideologies they claim to hold. The discrepancy between the theoretical arguments and the practices renders such parties as futile and incapable of delivering their declared objectives. The inner conflicts within the Ba'th party, and the conflicts between the Ba'th and Nasserism confirm the assumption that political movements make of ideology a mask beneath which is concealed ambitions of despotism and power. This supposition is given credibility by the irony

embedded in the argument which the narrator presents when the Ba'th seizes power in Iraq and Syria:

The objectives of the party shall not remain the subject of meetings, discussions and arguments. The activities of the party shall no longer be underground and restricted. The party has assumed its real responsibility of leading the Arab nation. It is now in power, representing the power of the party, the people, the state with all its institutions and social forms. Now is the time for a historical change, the real responsibility is to restructure the united socialist community. It begins now. The Ba'thist will now prove that they are not only the advocates of unity, but the makers of it. They will not feel contented to establish a unity between Syria and Iraq, because they are not willing to create two progressive fronts in the Arab world, or widen the gap of division among the Arabs. The Ba'th shall not let it go down in history that this party in its quest for power, relegated its principles (pp.284-5).

A character strongly-related to politics and stands in the novel as an emblem of utilitarianism and malevolence is Muşliḥ Karkar, the editor of al-Yaqazah Literary Supplement, whom the narrator associates with general Glubb. Muşliḥ, whose name ironically denotes reformation is the epitomy of corruption. His introduction by the narrator reveals the destructive role which such a character may perform:

in his forties, short, with blond, thick hair lined by grey ones.  
He had a big moustache fair, reddish skin, green, smiling eyes.  
The affinity to Glubb was strikingly great (pp.232-3).

When the authorities in Jordan closed al-Yaqazah for a period, they ran an alternative journal which attracted all capable pens, Muşliḥ was excluded, as his previous senior editor threatened to resign if Muşliḥ joins his



team Muşliḥ claims that he did not join the new journal out of loyalty to al-Yaqazah, and becomes the chief editor of its literary supplement. His promotion of figures who provided him with services as great literary persons reveal the reality of his character (pp.327-30). Angered by Fāris's success in his articles, Muşliḥ concentrates his attack on the Ba'th party, culminating in a poem in which he describes Ba'thist as "the flies that breed in garbage, the source of agony and malady to the Arab nation" (p.371). This poem which Muşliḥ meant as a retribution on Fāris and his comrades brings about Muşliḥ's end. As he leaves Jordan for Lebanon via Syria to claim his wife's rights of inheritance after her father's death, he disappears as he goes to the Syrian checkpoint to get his passport stamped (p.372), and the narrator sarcastically remarks, "Nobody knows in which verse of his poem Muşliḥ ultimately settled" (p.373).

The political scene as depicted in this novel reveals an unprincipled group of parties acting chaotically and without any sense of direction. However, this disorderly manner applies strictly to almost all the other economic and social aspects which the novel explores. The two emblems of local industry, Khalīl Mun'ish and Abu 'Abduh, are no less chaotic and disorderly than the political parties. Khalīl Mun'ish the owner of the fizzy drinks factory from which he gets his title, destroys by his rash and unruly behaviour the factory which his father establishes by hard work and diligence. Starting from a simple seller of Tamarind and other soft drinks on a wooden carriage near the bus station in Java, Khalīl Mun'ish's father develops his profession until he starts the fizzy factory. After his father's death, and in the wake of the disturbances in Palestine, Khalīl moves the factory to Amman

where he finds no competitors to his product. In his fifties, father to two sons and a daughter, Khalīl Mun‘ish marries Najāh, the teen-aged daughter of Abu ‘Abduh. However, this marriage proves to be a commercial bargain for Najāh and her parents. She robs him first of his money (pp.49-50), then pulls him into a partnership with her father in a restaurant that serves alcohol (pp.70-2), and which the demonstrators burn down; then she transfers the ownership of the house where he lives to her, mortgages and ultimately sells it to the usurer, Ḥarrān so that she could provide for her father’s new scheme, this time a fizzy factory competing with Mun‘ish’s own (p.141).

The competition between these two factories assumes a sort of bitter recriminations, accusations and underhand dealing. While both of them were engaged in their propaganda and counter-propaganda, a new company invades the market, an organised, active American company which manipulates all available means to promote its product:

By the end of spring, the city woke up unprepared to an unfamiliar demonstration. Stickers and posters on the walls and counters of stores, high over cross-roads and bridges, buses were decorated with pictures and phrases, while huge lorries carry unfamiliar bottles in strange boxes. The sound of the radio reiterating: “a delicious, unchanging taste”; cinemas display before their shows advertisements of cowboys crossing desserts in order to get a bottle, Garry Cowper’s favourite drink. In a musical manner, the radio announced “The best, unchanging taste,”; while on the buses the phrase ran: collect ten covers of empty bottles and get a free full one. The drawing of a bottle from which flows a wine-coloured liquid appeared everywhere. Jerry Lewis, Cary Grant, Marilyn Monroe, and Shirley Maclaine bathe in this liquid. A song broadcast from

the radio in which joined children, boys and girls, as well as adults in their dance, 'My lover's drink is Coca cola' (p.193).

Thus the local industry is wiped out completely from the market and is replaced by the new American Coca cola. Abu 'Abduh sells his factory to the Coca cola, while Mun'ish loses the case against his slanderous leaflets that the Coca cola uses pork in its products and sells everything he has to pay off his industrial debt and the fine which the court imposes on him (pp.237-8, 306-8).

The two sectors of the economy that have representative intermediate characters are the transportation and commerce. 'Awwād al-Nimr, who starts his career as a lorry driver that transports goods from and to Iraq, manages to make a fortune that helps him settle down in the avenue, purchase a piece of land where he makes a car-wash station and a moving service. Rumours about the source of his wealth centred around one issue, smuggling Syrian and Iraqi Jews to Palestine (pp.40-1). This rumour gains credibility by his abstinence from driving his own lorry and hiring a driver to perform his task. 'Awwād al-Nimr extends his activities to include cranes and new vehicles for transportation. He employs Anṭwān from Lebanon as an executive manager who helps the company develop and branch its activities until it becomes the largest in the area. In the absence of any control, and while 'Awwād is occupied with his sensual pleasures, Anṭwān seizes the opportunity and smuggles the company's properties to Lebanon, only to bring them back as newly-purchased goods. Thus he robs 'Awwād's money. 'Awwād's empire falls down and vanishes because,

Wheels do not wait for an inheritor nor for a successor, wheels do not wait for whoever runs behind them, they step on those who stand in their way or try to stop them. They are solely the property of the one who rides them, who can control their movement, accelerate their speed or redirect them. .... Wheels do not mind who owns them nor who makes or guards them. They are slaves only to those who ride, drive and direct them (pp.283-4).

Anwar 'Alī, on the other hand, becomes wealthy by a piece of good fortune when he buys a large number of barrels auctioned by the British forces, just a short period before the break of World War II, and the sudden demand for tanks which takes all the barrels off his hands, leaving him with a great wealth. This piece of luck is followed by another when he also buys tyres from the British army and the demand on them becomes great during the war. Acting on the device of his chief accountant, Khālīd al-Mullah, Anwar 'Alī moves to Amman. Here he becomes the tycoon whose wholesale activities cover almost every field, and his branches spread over the continents. Nevertheless, Anwar 'Alī maintains an infatuation with women which accompanied him since his early days when he worked as an apprentice at a dry-clean owned by Bahiyyah, the midwife whom he later marries. He marries Um Mālik, Khālīd al-Mullah's widow. His empire collapses with his death, as countless people come to claim their right for inheritance:

Acquaintances, managers, employees, workers and relatives with their lawyers came. He had relatives everywhere: in occupied Palestine, in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. How they knew of his death and how they arrived so quickly, nobody can tell. Perhaps he asked their help during his last ordeal, to escape from both the living and the dead, from Bahiyyah and Um

Mālik, from Khālid and Mālik. They did not help him, nor did they even comply with his will to take his body to his village, al-Ṭīrah, where he wanted to be buried. He was buried in the same cemetery beside Mālik and his father Khālid in Amman (p.332).

(ii) Background Characters:

The intermediate characters are supplemented by another host of background characters who help to shed light on certain aspects of the intermediate group, and place them in a social context. Several female characters occupy the scene, mainly, Fawziyyah, Fakhri's sister, Mālik's mother, Najāh, Terez, George's cousin, and Ṣabāh, Abu Widad's daughter whom Fāris marries.

Fawziyyah's role as a guardian of three youngsters, is given symbolic dimensions by the narrator. She suppresses her grief on her father's death, and tolerates her physical disability which the car accident caused, lest she may cause pain for her brother Fakhri. She becomes a mother not only for her brother, but for her two nephews who lost both parents in the accident. She gives out money to the poor, dinners in Ramadan for those who cannot afford it, and remains to the end a saintly figure who desires only one thing in this life, that is, to bring happiness to others. Fawziyyah is taken to hospital after her house collapses under an Israeli air raid. They amputate her second leg before she dies. In the hospital, a dialogue reminiscent of that which occurred between the doctor and Shamsuddīn occurs. This time between Fāris and the doctor:

'We are obliged to amputate her leg,'

'Impossible, impossible,' cried Fāris.

The doctor was not asking for his consent, he was simply passing a decision that had been taken. The human leg was no longer a leg. It had been completely crushed from the thigh by the wall. Fāris went on pleading: 'Please, do something!'

'My son, it is God who gives life,'

'What! Who mentioned anything about life? They were talking about the leg. Is there nothing to be done to her leg, apart from amputation? Will she spend the rest of her life without two legs? It's her lot! It's her lot! You do not know who Fawziyyah is. You do not know what Fawziyyah is. She is not a mortal, nor is she a body that decomposes. She is a passion, an entity, a homeland. Do homelands die? Can parts of a homeland be dismembered? Amputate her hands and her legs, but she shall remain herself, Fawziyyah. Help her to live' (p.390).

The symbolic dimension which this passage attempts to establish finds little confirmation within the text itself. It seems far-fetched and unrealistic, in spite of the rhetorical devices which the author employs.

The character of Um Mālik, the Syrian girl whom Khālīd al-Mullah at first marries in accordance with a bond of one year enjoyment.<sup>152</sup> Khālīd al-Mullah finds it impossible to abolish the bond when its time limit expires, as she gives birth to Mālik. Thus she continues to live with her husband. Her sexual desire is not satisfied, because her husband is most of his time dedicated to his work, and thinks of his sexual relation as a burdensome duty

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<sup>152</sup>This type of marriage is accepted as a legal marriage by Shi'ite Muslims. According to this marriage, the bond is binding for the period indicated on it after which it becomes null and void, and the couple must separate or renew the bond.

he has to perform. Khālīd's sudden death gives her the opportunity to marry Anwar 'Alī who, besides his wealth, had an insatiable desire for women (p.243). When Anwar 'Alī dies, Um Mālik becomes Fakhrī's mistress and leaves the country for Europe in an endless honeymoon (p.387).

The character of Ṣabāḥ, the daughter of Abu Widad who owns al-Yaqazah newspaper, performs an important role in revealing social hypocrisy. During her university years, she falls in love with one of her colleagues and loses her virginity. As her previous lover dumps her, she finds no way of escaping her parents' decision that she should marry Fāris. In the hotel on their first night of marriage, she informs Fāris of this fact (p.355). This takes Fāris by surprise, and leads to his decision to divorce her. She is the typical victim of a male-dominated society where females are strictly observed and censured, while males enjoy their freedom.

Terez, George's cousin, on the other hand, represents a typical stereotype of females. She takes her freedom within the range that leaves no impact on her future. She falls in love with Fāris, in spite of the religious barrier which both know will not allow them to marry. Therefore she observes the social rules and when her cousin proposes to her, she marries him, regardless of her first love.

The character of Najāḥ reveals another aspect of social exploitation. As her parents' plan to make her marry Shamsuddīn is aborted, they find in Mun'ish a substitute for Shamsuddīn. They are more interested in the wealth than in the happiness of their daughter. She accepts her role as a commodity, robs her husband, and provides for her father's plans. The manipulation and

exploitation of female characters reveal the corrupt ethical norms that are dominant in their society, and illustrates the hypocritical nature by which society envelops its lust and greed. This proposition is further emphasised by Luṭfi's exploitation of women. As an unsuccessful singer, due to his inability to respect his commitments and conform to appointments, he finds it more rewarding to manipulate his wife, Sammurah, as a bait to attract customers to his house where he practised his favourite hobby, gambling. His wife at first acts as a servant for his guests, but ends up practising prostitution (p.67). Luṭfi's exploitation of women continues even after his wife leaves him (p.117-8), as he works as a procurer disguised as an artist with female dancers accompanying him (pp.137-9).

## (2). Language:

In his novel, *Abna' al-Qal'ah*, Ziyad Qasim employs two major sets of linguistic discourse, each set performs specific semantic and structural roles. These sets are the classical or written and the spoken or 'amiyyah discourses. The written is the discourse which the narrator employs in introducing characters and places, and narrating events. It is also used in describing situations and characters, and is the language employed in commenting on events and the behaviour of characters. The spoken discourse can be also subdivided into two distinct forms: the ordinary, journalistic form and the poetical, highly-emotive, almost rhetorical form. The first form can be noted in the introduction of characters and the revelation of background information. For example, in introducing the character of Nāyif, the narrator says:



كان مجداً ومجتهداً أثرت فيه مخاوف الماضي في حيفا ويأس جده ، فجعلته منطوياً على نفسه بعيداً عن أجواء الحي وقصص المدرسة ، يعتكف في غرفته ويقبل بنهم على كتبه

He was hard working and studious. His grandfather's despair in Haifa and fears of the past had had their impact on his character. They made him reserved, kept to himself, staying away from the stories at school and the climate of the avenue. He remained alone in his room, bent on his studies (p.15).

Similarly, when the narrator comments on the appointment of the regi 'th socialist Party in Jordan as the secretary-general for the national command:

أنصف المؤتمرون رفاقهم في الاردن واختاروا في ختام جلسات مؤتمهم القومي المتعقد في دمشق الامين القطري في الاردن أميناً عاماً للحزب. بعد اعلان النبا ابتهج الرفاق في الاردن واغتبطوا واحتفلوا. .... قبل أن يغادر الى دمشق لتولي مسؤولياته على رأس التنظيم القومي للحزب أعاد الامين القطري تشكيل القيادة القطرية ريثما تتاح الفرصة للانتخابات

The participants in the national convention were fair to their comrades in Jordan. In the concluding session of the national convention held in Damascus, they elected the regional secretary in Jordan as the secretary-general for the party. Comrades in Jordan were delighted at this news and held celebrations.... Before leaving for Damascus to assume his new responsibility as head of the national party, he temporarily restructured the regional command until the time for elections comes (p.347).

the second form of appears in junctions in the novel, particularly when the object of discourse relates to an ideological issue, a decisive, political situation, a serious conflict, whether an inner conflict experienced by a character or an external conflict. In such junctions, the highly-emotive, poetical language is employed displacing the prosaic, journalistic one. For

instance, when Fāris discovers that his wife is another man's woman on his first wedding night, and the secretary-general of the party insists on inviting the couple to his house to celebrate their marriage, Fāris deplores his luck and says:

لماذا هي مغلقة في وجهي دائما ؟ ألا أستحق مثل غيري شيئا من الحظ ؟ ليأتيني الحظ مرة واحدة ولن يندم، مرة واحدة يا ناس. ليحصل أي شيء يأتي يلبي يلغي، يحصل أي شيء يلغي دعوة العشاء. لينشغل الأمين القومي، ليسافر. ما أجمل أن يعتذر الأمين القومي بنفسه عن هذه الدعوة " لو تموت صباحا غفا قليلا على المقعد في صالة الفندق كان مكتئبا يائسا خائفا مثل المحكوم بالاعدام. لقد سلم أمره تماما للظروف. ماذا يستطيع أن يفعل وقد فرضت عليه الهزائم؟

Why is luck always against me? Don't I deserve like other people a bit of luck? Let luck come to me for once, it will not regret. Oh, only once, let something happen to cancel, postpone or change this invitation for dinner. Let anything make him engaged, not free, leave for a trip abroad. How lovely it would be if the secretary-general apologises and postpones this invitation! If Şabāḥ dies. He slept on the bench in the corridor of the hotel, full of anxiety. He was sad, desperate and afraid as one sentenced to death. He totally left himself to the mercy of circumstances. What can he do at a time when defeats are imposed on him? (p.359).

When Nāyif gets his wings, we have the poetical response of Fawziyyah to this event, particularly as Nāyif and for the first time addresses her as his mother:

حلقت فيها النشوة حتى اصابتها بالارتقاء. انتفضت من ركبتيها. لم يقل لها يوما ماما. كم أحبت أن يقولها، كم أحبت أن تسمعها. الآن يا نايف؟ الآن وانت متألق مثل أخيل؟ الآن والنجوم تتلألأ على كتفيك؟ ما أجملك يا نايف، ما أجملك بالبزة العسكرية! آه لو أطيروا

معك مرة، لو أطيّر معك فوق الحي والمدينة والبلاد! يا حبيبي يا نايف. أَلْقَتْ عِكَازَهَا  
وَأَسْرَعَتْ نَحْوَهُ وَقَدْ نَسِيَتْ تَمَامًا سَاقَهَا الْخَشَبِيَّةَ. ضَمَّتْهُ إِلَيْهَا، أَخَذَتْ تَمَسِّحُ بِيَدِهَا عَلَى شَعْرِهِ.  
لِمَاذَا الطَّائِرَةُ؟ إِنَّهَا تَطِيرُ مَعَهُ الْآنَ تَطِيرُ مُنْتَصِرَةً بَعِيدًا عَنْ كُلِّ تِلْكَ السَّنِينَ مِنَ الْحَسْرَةِ وَالْأَلَمِ  
وَالْإِحْبَاطِ، تَطِيرُ مَعَهُ بَيْنَ النُّجُومِ، تَضَعُ رَاحَتَهَا عَلَى كَتِفِهِ، تَتَلَمَّسُ تِلْكَ النُّجْمَةَ الْوَضَاءَةَ بِرَفَقٍ  
وَأَنَانَةٍ وَكَأَنَّهَا تَتَلَمَّسُ زَهْرَةَ الْيَاسْمِينِ

She was ecstatically thrilled to the extent of relaxation. He had never before addressed her as 'mum'. Her knees trembled. How much she yearned to hear this word uttered by him! 'Now you say it, Nāyif? Now when you are conspicuous like Achilles? Now when stars glisten on your shoulders? How charming you are, Nāyif! How charming you look in your military uniform! Oh, were I to join you on a flight over the avenue, the city and the country, my dear Nāyif.' She threw away her clutches, rushed towards him completely forgetful of her wooden leg. She embraced him, stroke his hair. Why the aircraft? What need for it now? She is already flying with him, flying away victoriously from all those years of agony, frustration and misfortune. she flies amidst the stars with him, puts her hands on his shoulders, touching that shiny star gently and carefully, as though she were touching a jasmin flower (p.197).

The novel is full of such passages that contain rhetorical language, but for the purpose of this research, the examples cited above are sufficient. The second discourse which the author employs is the 'amiyyah or the spoken dialect. It is employed in dialogue and enables the reader not only to distinguish the ethnic origin of the characters, but their educational level as well. In this work different forms of dialects are employed ranging from the dialect of Palestinian peasants which appears in Anwar 'Alī's conversations, to the dialect of the city in Palestine, which appears in Mun'ish's dialogues, to the Damascene dialect in Abu 'Abduh's dialogues and the Bedouin in

Harrān's dialogues (pp.28, 33, 283, 289-90) and there is also the Lebanese dialect when Anṭwān enters into conversations (pp.206, 234). We also come across the Egyptian dialect when the novel shifts to Cairo where Fakhrī, Mālik and Nāyif study (pp.95-7).

It is important to note that the author employs in dialogues where Sacasians are participating, and this poses a question for this usage, since Sarcasians in Jordan, like many other foreign minorities who settled in Jordan, have a distinctive accent that can be easily recognised.<sup>153</sup> There are also expressions that some characters use which reveal an educational level not attained by them. For instance, Fawziyyah's reference to Achilles cannot be accepted, taking into consideration her level of education (p.197) or her reference to Nāyif in the Egyptian dialect (p.99). In some instances, the author makes some remarks on characters that do not fit into their context well. For instance, commenting on the issue which rose as a result of the difference about which woman should give suck to Izdihar, since Mun'ish does not want her mother to do so, the author inserts in an obtrusive manner the name of the Syrian National Party (p.80), or his comment on Muḥārīb's approach to the avenue, he says, "Even Muḥārīb knows the step-by-step approach" (p.173). These are just samples of many similar anachronisms which appear in the work. The author also uses extended passages of political polemics in the form of dialogue which make the parts where they are included look close to

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<sup>153</sup> Sarcasians, Chechnyans, Turks and Armenians who form presently part of the population in Jordan have special way of speaking Arabic, whether fusha or 'amiyyah, particularly in determining the genders that form prefixes or suffixes in verbs and nouns.

political articles that interrupt the flow of the narrative, without contributing to its artistic value.<sup>154</sup>

*Abna' al-Qal'ah* is considered one of the best novels that follow the conventional form and techniques in Jordan during the eighties. Some Jordanian critics find a strong affinity between qasim's novel and Mahfouz's early works. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Yaghi finds in *Abna' al-Qal'ah*,

that special taste which one finds in the street of *Bayn al-Qaṣrayn*, or in *Qaṣr al-Shawq* and *al-Sukariyyah*<sup>155</sup>

Ibrahim al-Sa'afin believes that

This novel brings to one's mind Naguib Mahfouz's works whose subject matter is the slums, particularly *Madaq Alley*, or Ḥannā Mīna's *The Blue Lamps*, where the main protagonist is place (1995: 86).

GḤasan 'Abd al-Khaliq argues that the vision enclosed in *Abna' al-Qal'ah* is close to that of Mahfouz's novel, *Awlād Ḥāritna*, and believes that

It becomes more comprehensible to refer Qasim's work to the influence of Naguib Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy*, where the

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<sup>154</sup> See for example the dialogue between George and Faris concerning the command of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party to abolish the party so as to achieve unity with Egypt in 1958 pp.151-3; the speech also which George delivers on the importance of achieving the unity between Syria and Egypt and the effect of this union in deterring the current imperialist assault on the area, pp.136-7. The argument between Faris and George following the collapse of the union, pp.195-7. See also the lengthy commentary by the narrator on the hopes and aspirations of the Ba'thists in the aftermath of the party seizing power in Syria and Iraq, pp.284-5.

<sup>155</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Yāghī, "Ma' Ziyād Qāsim fī Riwāyatih *Abnā' al-Qal'ah*," in *al-Ra'yi Literary Supplement*, (9th Oct. 1992).

historical dimension can be identified and consequently the issue of generations which occupies the centre of both works.<sup>156</sup>

The novels that appear during the early 1990s whether in the conventional form and techniques or in the experimental trend may reveal the impact which the novels of the eighties had on the authors who came at a later stage, or those who continued their production from the period under discussion in this research. The following pages will attempt to examine the impact of the novel in Jordan during the eighties on the future production.

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<sup>156</sup>Ghassān 'Abd al-Khāliq, *op. cit.*

## Conclusion

This study has attempted to show that the novel in Jordan during the period under study witnessed a real development in its form and content; and has hopefully managed to reveal that it is almost difficult to find published works that deserve much attention before this period, apart from Sbūl's work, *Ant Mundh al-Yawm*, Amīn Shinnār's *al-Kabūs* and Salim al-Naḥḥās's *Awṛāq 'Āqir* that were produced in 1968 after the defeat of June 1967.

The study has also shown that one of the important Jordanian novelists whose works are of high artistic performance and who produced novels during the period 1967-79 and continued until his death in 1989 is Halasa. This Jordanian novelist, however, spent most of his life in exile, and his production had very little or no impact on the literary scene in his country, as it was unavailable for the public there. Halasa's novels are unconventional in both form and content. One cannot find a central plot that the whole novel is structured around, but rather an episodic structure, and apparently unrelated events that at first perplex the reader. However, underneath this seemingly chaotic, episodic structure lies a deeply-connected, integrated organic entity. Halasa's works on the whole engage themselves with common taboos in the Arab world. His obsession with writing about sex is a natural revolt against the common taboo which many other Arab writers impose willingly on their own production. It is a new expression, perhaps, of his political and social revolt

against the accepted moral and social norms. Since in many Arab countries sex is used by the authorities as a means of humiliating individuals and extracting confessions from them, Halasa found it more convenient to expose these degrading techniques through his novels and reveal the profound traumatic impact they can have on society as a whole.

Thus we find in Halasa's novels different forms of sex ranging from the exalted, celebrated form which appears between his male protagonists and their female partners, to the profane, prostitution, the incestuous or the perverted forms.

The Jordanian novelists who produced their work during the eighties and whose works have been studied in this research share many common features with Halasa. All these writers belonged to political parties that were outlawed in Jordan during the late fifties and up till the late eighties of this century. Halasa was a member of the then outlawed Jordanian Communist Party, while al-Razzaz, Farkouh and Qasim as well as Sbül were members of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. They all were disillusioned with their parties and left them for good. Similarly, all these writers received their higher education outside Jordan and most of them spent years of either optional or forced exile in other Arab countries. This shared experience reflects on their works in having the focus outside the country, although in many instances, Jordan figures in the background in one form or another. Another point which all these writers share is the centrality of the June defeat to their works. It foreshadows and sometimes dominates the scene in almost all the works. Even when no direct reference is made to it, the reader can easily sense it lurking



beneath the surface. This perhaps explains the strong sense of bitterness and disappointment which their novels convey.

The two major trends in the novel in Jordan during the period 1980-1990 are the conventional and the experimental trends. The representative Jordanian novelists of the experimental trend are al-Razzaz and Farkouh. The new techniques can be roughly classified into two groups: Narrative devices pertaining to the method of narration and the presentation of point of view. The second group is more of a thematic nature, relating to the socio-political scene and the ideological forces that form the genesis of confrontation within the world mapped within these works. the narrative devices range from the absence of chronology, dispensation with the external characterisation, the polyphonic dialogues, to the use of "the Chinese Box", intertextuality, parody and the juxtaposition of oppositions whether in ideology or life. These techniques reveal the fragmentation and disconfiguring of the psyche of the Arab individual under the impact of oppressive authoritarian regimes whose repressive and suppressive practices extend beyond the intelligible to the degree of absurdity.

In his experimentation in the novel, al-Razzaz attempts to match his thematic schemata with suitable narrative techniques. The fractured ego of the Arab intellectual, the absence of a separating line between reality and illusion, between waking and hallucination, and between reality and the nightmare, form the central thesis of his first three novels. The narrative techniques in these three works have many shared characteristics, although each one has its own distinct features.

In his first novel, *Aḥiā' fī al-Baḥr al-Mayyit*, the reader is confronted by a world of fragmented consciousness and insanity. To give expression to such a form, the author relegated the act of narration to one of the major characters in the work itself. This narrator, however, is not the implied author as is usually the case with similar novels, but rather the editor of the memoirs of the implied narrator. This is why we find two voices participating in the narrative. But the ordering of events, the introduction and the conclusion play an important role in directing the reader towards the interpretation which the editor adopts. The work appears fragmented, repetitive and hazy. It is meant to reflect the fragmented, perplexed and insecure Arab individual who finds no logic or reason to govern the attitude of politicians in his world. In such a situation, it is natural that the narrative should be of an introspective and subjective nature. The stream-of-consciousness technique is thus employed to reveal the most intimate and inner thoughts of the individual.

The major characteristic feature of his second novel, *I'tirāfāt Kātim Ṣawt*, is the sense of isolation and lack of communication. An isolation imposed by the autocratic ruler on his once closest ally. To achieve this, al-Razzaz employs the shot technique where we are introduced to each character alone, while the character reveals his or her inner thoughts and recollections. There is little dialogue in the novel, apart from recollections of the past, and the brief scenes in the last part. This lack of dialogue heightens the sense of isolation and repression that are dominant thematic features of the work. The first-person narrator, "I," is thus the main source for the presentation of events. Nevertheless, the omniscient narrator is always there, reminding us of his presence by introducing the character whose "I" shifts the point of view from

one perspective to another. What is important to be noticed in this work is the technique by which the reader is supposed to sympathise with, or in contrary situations, to judge characters. In the first case, characters are made to think aloud, rather than address themselves to the reader or hint at an audience.

Thus the internal monologue replaces dialogue and offers a means of presenting the most intimate thoughts directly to the reader. On the other hand, characters who represent the autocratic authority or perform as instruments in the hands of oppression are always presented through some other consciousness, not in their subjective thoughts. The reader is intended, one assumes, to observe them in a more objective perspective and look on their thoughts and actions with the eye of reason, not sympathy. In some instances, however, the reader is presented with these characters in the first-person "I"; nevertheless, their address is directed towards an implied audience that deprives it of the sense of privacy and makes such an address a sort of rationalisation for their actions, rather than a genuine confrontation of their deeds by their conscience.

Central to al-Razzaz's third novel, *Matāhah al-A'rāb fī Nāṭiḥāt al-Sarāb* are the concepts of going astray and the deception of the senses in terms of its title and content. The author employs several devices to achieve these goals in both form and technique. The episodic division of the novel creates a disconnected, anarchic form that insinuates to the reader the dominant climate of loss and bewilderment. Characters have more than one life and in some instances they have more than one physical appearance. Each character narrates his or her life or some other person's life. Thus the narrative fluctuates

between the first person and the omniscient narrators. Lack of chronology and the absence of logical order reveal the absurd situation, and the illogical status the characters confront in the world of the novel.

In his fourth novel, *Jum 'a al-Qafārī: Yawmiyāt Nakirah*, al-Razzaz adopts a different narrative technique from that which he adopts in his previous works. Since this novel takes the form of memoirs, it is natural that it should be a series of unrelated events, with the sole connection being the character of Jum'a himself. This also explains the use of the first-person narrator, "I" which narrates most of the novel. In this work we also find the manipulation of the Chinese-box technique which presents in one of its aspects the difficulties that confront an author in creating his own imaginary world and which is in itself a manifestation of the Post-Modernist production of fiction.

Al-Razzaz's works and Sbūl's work had their influence on Farkouh's first novel in terms of its themes and narrative technique. Farkouh employed several narrative techniques that can be considered experimental, particularly in his presentation of events and point of view. As part of his experimentation, Farkouh employs a dual discourse in his novel to express two different levels of awareness within the world of his work. The first one is the journalistic discourse which provides the reader with background information about the political and social situation surrounding the novel. Such information is necessary for the comprehension of the general climate of events. This discourse is relegated to footnotes that appear in different places in the work, and give insights to the reader and help in analysing and understanding the characters thoroughly. To differentiate the two discourses, the journalistic one

is written in italics, a device which had been employed by other novelists, such as Faulkner, Joyce and Kanafani. It is a sort of background information meant to build up the reader's feedback concerning the actions and thoughts of the characters who are not supposed to be aware of the narrator's revelation of facts and his reporting to the reader. The second discourse which Farkouh employs in his work is the literary one which presents the characters, their thoughts and their actions.

This structural experimentation is combined with a variety of narrative techniques in order to construct a poetical and a narrative structure. The anonymous narrator, who reports background information in footnotes, is perhaps the same omniscient narrator whom the reader comes across in the literary discourse and whose function is to make comments on situations, provide remarks and explanations for some actions of the characters, as well as describe some scenes. In some instances, the omniscient narrator takes over the responsibility of revealing the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. Side by side with the third-person omniscient narrator, Farkouh employs the first-person singular narrator in reporting personal experiences of the characters. Recollected memories of the past are presented in a personalised, subjective manner, a method for heightening the immediacy and acuteness of the experience. Observations about characters are also presented through the eyes of other characters to complement the portrait depicted subjectively. This method of characterisation applies to the depiction of almost all the characters of the novel.

A third narrative voice which appears is the second person, "you", which is, perhaps, an expression of the fractured psyche, a symbol of the schism from which the characters suffer. Such a narrative voice can only be understood as a sort of an internal monologue or a reasoning with oneself by oneself. This medley of narrative voices, the omniscient narrator, the first-person and the second person narrators, enable Farkouh to move easily with his narrative in the external and inner worlds of his characters. Other narrative devices which Farkouh employs in this novel are the stream-of-consciousness, the flashback, the montage, the dream, the memoirs and the recollection techniques. The whole novel is in one sense a novel of recollection. All the events are presented in retrospection, apart from the fates of the characters.

The structural division is reflected in the type of discourse presented. The whole work is written in Arabic *fuṣḥā*, including the dialogue between characters. There is a sort of standardisation in the manner characters from different countries, temperaments, educational levels and social classes speak. The absence of the local dialects deprives the reader also of the ability to identify the origins of the characters without the assistance of an external device, such as information provided by the anonymous narrator, or remarks made by the character or other characters that indicate the homeland of each one. The language of the literary discourse in this work is characterised by the extensive use of descriptive passages. These descriptive passages sometimes function as elucidation of innate traits of the characters themselves. A second is the manipulation of linguistic associations and the generation of polysemic structures, evoking different semantic patterns in the text. This feature is common in Western works during the twenties and thirties of this century,

especially in the novels of Proust, Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner. A third linguistic feature that characterises the narrative literary discourse in Farkouh's novel, *Qāmāt al-Zabad* is the employment of theological references and allusions. The pervasiveness of Christian terminology and concepts is undoubtedly another influence that can perhaps be traced to Joyce, or at least lend itself to comparisons which can be made between the works of the two authors. It is important in this respect to indicate that there are many elements that indicate a strong influence of Western writers of the early twenties and thirties of this century on the writers of the experimental trend, and a research of such influences is worth undertaking.

A fourth linguistic feature of the narrative literary discourse in *Qāmāt al-Zabad*, is the poetic emotional language. In fact, some passages are concentrated, condensed, laconic to the extent that they can be extracted from their contexts and read as free verse. A fifth linguistic feature of the narrative literary discourse is the manipulation of different forms of humour. There are comic situations which reduce the tension of the gloomy atmosphere in the world of the novel, a sort of comic relief. In some instances, jokes express scepticism and cynicism with which intellectuals view the Arab status quo and the prospects for the future.

The Jordanian novelists of the experimental trend continued to produce works during the 1990s, and their works show a strong influence on the new generation that began its production during the last six years. However, parallel to the production of these novelists in the eighties, there were many writers who attempted to produce novels in the conventional form which

dominates the Arabic novel in the whole Arab world. It is important to note that this production of the novel in Jordan was not sufficiently developed in terms of its narrative techniques, structure and characterisation to be justly classified as works of literary merit. Among the writers of this trend are Hāshim Gharaybeh, Yūsuf al-Ghazu, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Mangho and Ṭāhir al-‘Adwān. Their works on the whole can be viewed through the same perspective used to view the works of the novelists of the sixties and seventies (See Chapter 5 pp.232-8).

The only Jordanian novelist who managed to produce a work of relatively high artistic value using conventional techniques is Ziyad Qasim. Qasim employs the omniscient narrator to present the past, present and destiny of his characters. The thoughts of characters, the flow of events and their outcome are also viewed through the eyes of the narrator who often seizes the opportunity to comment and propose possibilities for the choices posed or the developments that can occur. He also sets the scenes and portrays the landscape, probing into the psychology of his characters and their emotional responses to situations. His ironic remarks are often inserted before or after a flow of events which determine the future of a character or the outcome of actions. Similarly, the narrator introduces background information about characters, events and places whose details have their impact on the events, but stand outside the time enclosed within the novel, in order to promote the reader's awareness within the time-span of the narrative. Thus the role which the omniscient narrator performs is instrumental and significant in almost all respects. The reader is heavily dependent on the information which the



omniscient narrator provides, in order to construct the ideological interpretation and the signification to which the narrative alludes.

The novel follows a strict chronology in the arrangement of events, moving in a progressive line towards the end. However, the reader is always supplied with background information about characters and the developments that affect them.

Qasim presents in this work a vast landscape of human characters whose presence is essential to the thematic structure of the novel. Through the network of relations, the ideological thrust of the narrative is disclosed, manifesting a critique on, and a parody of, real life. But the real active characters are not the generation which is born after the war, but those who have witnessed the war and even in many cases, those who have been adults during it.

Qasim introduces a gallery of characters whose actions form the bulk of the novel and whose active participation creates the overall view which the narrative seeks to endorse. In order to integrate such a vast number of characters into his work, he employs a structural device that facilitates his task. He divides the novel into sections, each section begins with a name of a character whom he introduces and presents the background from which that character emerges. This device which provides the reader with the historical and psychological background, leaves little room for speculation on the development and future of that character. His characters stand as emblems of political ideologies, social classes, economic powers and moral values.

In *Abna' al-Qal'ah*, Qasim employs two major sets of linguistic discourse, each set performs specific semantic and structural roles. These sets are the classical and the spoken or a'miyyah discourses. The *fuṣṣḥa* is the discourse which the narrator employs in introducing characters and places, and narrating events. It is also used in describing situations and characters, and is the language employed in commenting on events and the behaviour of characters. The *fuṣṣḥa* discourse can be also subdivided into two distinct forms: the ordinary, journalistic form and the poetical, highly-emotive, almost rhetorical form. The first form can be noted in the introduction of characters and the revelation of background information.

The second form of *fuṣṣḥa* appears in junctions in the novel, particularly when the object of discourse relates to an ideological issue, a decisive, political situation, a serious conflict, whether an inner conflict experienced by a character or an external conflict. In such junctions, the highly-emotive, poetical language is employed displacing the prose, journalistic one. The second discourse which the author employs is the 'amiyyah or the spoken dialect. It is employed in dialogue and enables the reader not only to distinguish the ethnic origin of the characters, but their educational level as well. In this work different forms of dialects are employed ranging from the dialect of Palestinian peasants, Palestinian citydwellers, Damascene, Lebanese, Egyptian and Bedouin dialects. However, Qasim produced during the last two years two novels which are considered to be as the complementary parts of his trilogy, and these works show an improvement which may place him among the best novelists in the Arab world. Looking in retrospect at the novel in Jordan, we find it has moved firmly in this decade from the period of

establishing its identity to competing with other novels that have acquired international recognition for their artistic merit.

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